Today is January the 25th, 1990. And we're in Los Angeles. And could you identify yourself for me, please?

My name is Sally Roisman.

And Mrs. Roisman, what was your maiden name?

My maiden name was Zielinski.

Zielinski.

In Polish, Zielinska.

Zielinska. And when were you born? I was born October 2nd, 1930. And could you tell me where you were born?

I was born in Sosnowiec, Poland, near the German border, near Katowice.

And tell me a little bit about your family. How many members of the family were you?

I was one of 11 children. My mother, father, and 11 of us.

And where did you fall in within that 11? Were you one of the oldest, one of the youngest?

I was just about the middle.

Just about the middle. And was your family one that you would consider a religious family? Was it a secular family?

We were very religious family. In fact, my father was very Orthodox. And my mother wore a sheitel.

A sheitel, so would you characterize yourself as a Hasidic family?

A Hasidic family definitely.

And what did your father do for a living? My father did wholesale textile, and he also had the title of a rabbi. And at times, he prayed for congregation during the high holidays.

And where you lived, was it primarily a Jewish area or was it a mixed area? Were Jews a predominant group in that area?

Yes. The Jews were predominant in that area.

How many people would you say lived--

In Sosnowiec?

Mm-hmm.

I'm really not quite sure. There may have been. I wouldn't even try to guess, maybe 100,000. Maybe that many. I'm not quite sure though.

Did the Jews and non-Jews live together, or were there--

Some areas people lived together. And there were a few streets where Jews lived, predominantly Jews.

Was that where you lived, in that? Was it?

Yes, yes.

And was it a rural setting or an urban setting?

It was an urban setting.

Urban setting. And you mentioned that you were a very religious family. So then I would assume that you went to a religious school, as opposed to a secular school?

Yes. I attended a religious school.

Was there a public school though in the area where Jews and non-Jews attended together?

Yes, there were. Did you have much contact with non-Jews growing up?

Some, yes.

Would you characterize it as positive, or negative, or both.

Most of it was negative.

How so? Antisemitism was prevalent in Poland. And it wasn't unusual to get hit with a stone by another child, if the child recognized you as being Jewish.

Did this happen to you?

Yes.

At what age how? Old were you when you first--

Five, six. Did your family have any political affiliations? Was your family a Zionistic oriented family? Was it a non-Zionist?

My family wasn't actively Zionistically involved. But I remember that some parts of the family have left. And my mother's sister, who had probably just as many children as we had, left for Israel prior to the outbreak of the war. We did consider leaving Poland because of antisemitism.

This was before you knew anything about Hitler, or what was going on in Germany? Or did that--

I'm not quite sure. I think probably a year or two before Hitler.

Now, you were a very young girl. You were not even 10 years old when the Nazis invaded Poland. Do you ever remember your parents discussing what was happening in Germany? Because you did live in an area close to the German border. So do you ever remember your parents discussing what was going on with Hitler and the rise of Nazism? And do you recall German Jews who had maybe been of Polish origin coming back to Poland?

Yes, I do. And in fact, the building in which we lived, a family from Germany moved into our building. That family was expelled from Germany. The family consisted of a mother, and father, and two children. The mother was of German Christian origin the father was Jewish. And the father was born in Poland. And their two children were half Jewish, I suppose. And they moved into our building. And I played with the younger son.

Do you recall any apprehensions on the part of your parents that what was going on in Germany might then spill over

into Poland? Or were you too young to really--

I personally don't recall that. And I'm not quite sure about that.

When do you first remember hearing your parents discussing Hitler?

There were preparations made. I remember there were ditches dug in case of air raids. And that when I became aware that a war was probably in the near future. And prior to the outbreak of the war, perhaps a day or two, my family left that part of Poland because we were near the German border, in order to get into the interior of Poland.

Figuring that you would be safer closer in?

That we would be safer, but while we were still traveling, one morning we looked out the windows and we saw German tanks driving into that part of Poland. So my parents probably thought that it was no use going further. So we returned back home.

Now you had mentioned that the family had at one point considered emigrating either to the US or to Palestine. Was that much before the invasion?

That was before the invasion.

But it was impossible for you to--

At that time there was mainly talk, but no action was taken.

Can I ask you what was your mother's name, and her maiden name?

My mother's name was Hinda Perchik.

And your father's name? My father's name was Shaja Beresh Zielinski.

And what were your brothers' names? My brother's name was Hirsh Mayer Eliezer, and I had Nathan, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Simon who is alive now.

And your sisters? My sister was Esther, my oldest sister. And I had an older sister Manya who passed away since then. But she survived the camp and I had two younger sisters, Rose and Yentila.

Rose and Yentila. Your parents were always from that area, or have they migrated to that area of Poland?

I know that my father came from Czestochowa, which was a different part of Poland but my mother as far as I know lived in that part of Poland all. I'm sure she was born in that part of Poland.

One last question about your family, besides I mean you had a big immediate family, 11 children, parents. Did you have aunts and uncles or grandparents also living in the general area?

Yes. We had about three aunts who had probably the same amount of children, give or take one, more or less. And one aunt and uncle left for Israel, because their daughter went to Israel with a young man, and settled in Israel. And they sent affidavits for their parents and their children.

And there was one daughter of theirs who was over the age of 18, and couldn't leave with her parents. So she stayed behind.

So we're talking about a family, an immediate family of first cousins, aunts, uncles, siblings, of at least 50 or more people.

More, I'm sure there are more. I haven't mentioned my father's two sisters. And they lived in a different part of Poland.

But they also had a similarly large family.

Yes.

So now you were saying that you remember a couple of days before the actual invasion you left to try to get to the center of Poland, figuring you'd be safer there. But when the invasion actually happened, the Nazis were able to take over so quickly that it didn't really matter where you were. And you returned back to Sosnowiec?

Right.

Did it change immediately? Was it a gradual change when the Nazis came in?

It changed immediately.

How so?

It changed that the Jews were separated from the Poles.

Right away?

Right away, in most areas. It changed immediately that they drove out the Jews when they entered parts of Poland. They took the heads of families out into the marketplace, and they burned the synagogue right away.

And this happened in your--

This happened when we returned back, which was a matter of a couple of days.

Was there a sense of panic, of shock? How would you describe the way people were reacting? And let's first start with your parents, and then the outside community.

Yes. There was a sense of panic, and shock, and disbelief that the Germans took over Poland in such a short time. And my family was immediately involved, since they persecuted religious Jews, Orthodox Jews, more than the other Jews. So my father couldn't venture out, because since he had a long beard, the Germans sometimes pulled out the beards by their roots.

So my father stayed home quite a lot. And he gave up his business in order not to go out and risk his life. So my brothers took over the support of the family.

Now I know that in some cases Jews were forced to either give up or sell for a nominal amount of money their business to non-Jews. They weren't allowed to own businesses or property. Is this what happened in your father's case, or did he just let the business go?

He let the business go, because there was a storage, a storeroom. And since he was in wholesale, other retailers who had opened stores dealing with the public had to give over the stores to Germans. They were called [NON-ENGLISH], commissars who took over Jewish businesses.

Were you able to remain in your house, or was there an order that required Jews to move into a specific area of the city?

We moved a couple of streets where we had to be among Jews only later on.

So not immediately?

Not immediately.

Now, you mentioned that your brothers took on the responsibility of providing for the family. How old were your brothers?

My older brother was just about going to go into the army. So he must have been--

About 18?

I think it was 21.

Oh, really?

Yes.

You had been living a middle class comfortable existence. Describe the contrast between what your life had been like before the Nazis invaded and what happened immediately after they invaded.

As far as economics?

Economics, food, clothing.

Yeah. We, first of all, the Germans made us give up all the jewelry we had, gold and silver, and they even took away our candelabra. So the candles were lit on a small candle holder. We were given rations. We were given weekly rations.

I want to ask you something about the possessions that you were forced to give up. Were you given an edict that you had to bring everything to a specific place, or did they go house to house?

We had to bring the things to a specific place.

Were you able to hide anything? Did you did you bring everything, or--

We were able to hide some small items.

Now you were saying that food was rationed.

Food was rationed. And we could there were long lines for food. And we received only basic foods. There was no sugar. There was a sugar substitute, and no butter. There was some milk, and bread, and potatoes. But we also had to wait in long lines for food. The Poles were given the food ahead of us. Also, the family that I mentioned, the Christian lady from Germany, went to the head of the line. And we were the last ones in the line of food, to receive food. And often they ran out of food. And we had to go home without.

What about meat and poultry? I mean you mentioned bread and potatoes.

Once a week we received meat.

Was it kosher?

It was still kosher. Yes, in fact, the family who came from Germany was buying non-kosher food. And I told the boy, I said, your mother buys non-kosher food. So he said, but my mother makes it kosher. To me, it seemed highly unusual at the time.

Who were the authorities there? Were they Germans? Or were they Poles appointed by the Germans? What was the

chain of command?

The Germans. There were also some Poles who became Volksdeutsche. And they were not too friendly inclined towards Jews. And there was a Jewish [NON-ENGLISH], a militia setup. And the head of the Jewish [NON-ENGLISH] was Moniek Merin for Sosnowiec.

Was this Jewish militia one that was helpful? How would you characterize them?

In a way, they were helpful. Sometimes they had to go to homes and take people out, with the help of the Nazis.

How were they viewed by the community, by the Jewish community?

They were viewed as working with the Germans, yet trying to help the Jews so that the Germans would not treat them as badly as they might have treated them. And they claimed that they are doing their best to postpone the liquidation of the Jews.

How quickly after they came in, the Nazis came in, did they start doing selections, did they start arranging for transports of people outside, that they start started putting together labor groups, et cetera?

OK. Excuse me. We'll make a change.

OK.

All right.

OK, as I asked you before the tape ended, how quickly after the Nazis came in did they start doing selections, did they start taking people out for labor groups, that people they started creating transports?

I think that it must have been about 1941 when they took my brother, Simon, away. And we didn't know where they were taking him. But we received cards from him, so we knew that he was in a concentration camp, a labor camp rather.

Was this fairly early? Had they been taking people out from '39 on, or was your brother one of the first to be taken?

I'm not quite sure about that.

I mean, you were very young. You were--

Right. So I know what involved us immediately.

Your own family.

Yes, they may have started in '40, 1940. But my brother was taken I think '41. But in 1942, they drove us out into a large area. All the Jews were gathered and driven out in a large area.

Near Sosnowiec?

In Sosnowiec proper.

Oh, in Sosnowiec. So up until that point, the community was still pretty much intact then?

Yes.

So from about '39 to '42, you suffered primarily from a scarcity of food. Your living conditions, of course, had changed. You weren't in a formal ghetto yet.

No.

Jews were restricted to a certain area?

Jews had to wear armbands with Jude.

And the yellow star.

Yellow star, but I was too young. Over a certain age, you had to wear. So I was able to just walk around without any sign of being Jewish. But my older sisters, and brothers, and parents wore the bands outside.

Were you still allowed to go to school?

No. They closed schools immediately. There were no schools available for Jewish children. As soon as the Germans marched into Poland, the schools were closed.

So how did they continue your education? Was it just done at home by your parents? Or did they bring in tutors within the community so you could keep up with your studies?

There wasn't enough money available for actual tutoring. There was some by the parents and the older sisters and brothers.

So informal.

Informal.

What about religious life? How during, from '39 to '42, was it difficult to go to shul? Was it difficult to keep holidays up in the way you had prior to the invasion?

Naturally, everything was done more or less discreetly. You couldn't practice religion the way you practiced religion prior to the outbreak of the war.

Now, in '42, you mentioned they took the entire community to an open area of Sosnowiec. Were you just given an order? Or were you put on trucks and taken there? What happened?

We were given an order to leave home and to come to that place. And that's what my parents told me. When we got up in the morning, they said, we have to go to this place. And all the Jews have to go there. And they assembled us there in a large area.

And that was the worst thing so far that happened to us. Since two SS men were in front of the group. And when our turn came to walk up to the two SS men, he pointed his finger for my father to go to one side, and the rest of the family to the other side.

Did you have any idea what that meant?

We had no idea what it meant. But my mother wanted just to hang on to my father. And she was pushed away brutally by the SS men. So we didn't know what was going to happen to my father. And we came home without our father. We were allowed to go back home.

Did you see where he was taken to, or he just went off to one side and you went off to another side, and you were told to return home?

We were told to return home. And we didn't know where they took him.

And you mentioned two SS men. But obviously there were hundreds of Jews that were gathered there. So there must have been other Nazi soldiers and what was the volks--

Volksdeutsche.

Volksdeutsche who were assisting them as well?

Yes. There were more Germans that were guarding the whole area. But what we saw--

But these were the two men in charge?

--was these two made the decision which way my father was to go and which way we should go.

You got home. How long before you had any idea where your father was taken to? Did you hear from him at all?

We never heard from him and that changed our lives completely. Life had become very sad without our father. My mother was crying constantly. And we missed him very much.

Did you get a note, anything from him?

No, no notes. No. We didn't know what happened to him.

So you never heard from him again?

We never heard from him again, no.

How old was he?

He was probably in his early 50s.

Faced with this, you said your mother was crying. I mean, did she completely fall apart? Was she--

She stopped eating, like she was saving food for us. And she said sometimes she wished she went with him. But then she says, but I love you so much that I'm pleased to be with but. She missed my father very much.

Did one of your older siblings have to take control of the family, or was your mother very much in control even though obviously she was beside herself over what had happened to your father?

No, my mother wasn't in control since then. No, she gave up a lot of her life. And my older brothers and my sister Edzia were the heads-- they became the heads of the family.

Did you hear at all what had happened to people who had been taken away like that? Were there any stories coming to you about what was going on? Had you heard about Auschwitz, or Sobibor, or any of these places?

We were just beginning to hear about Auschwitz. And actually, we had a Polish family that were friends of my sister who tried to find out where they took my father. These people did this for some monetary compensation.

And they said that they would try and find out, and see if they can contact my father. And the Polish lady had a German Nazi as a friend. And she said that she might be able to go someplace with him and find out where our father was.

It took about some time. And I know that one day I remember my sister came back after meeting with that Polish lady, and she talked to my mother, and they were all crying. The Polish lady apparently got sick with what she saw. And we assumed it was Auschwitz. And she couldn't tell us much.

And she was a very nice lady. And we thought that she was afraid of actually telling us what she really saw. We still didn't know for sure. But we found out at that time that things were very bad.

Was there a formal ghettoization of the Jewish community in Sosnowiec? At that time, there was no formal ghetto. The formal ghetto started in 1943.

What time of year?

I think it was the beginning of, perhaps January, the very beginning of 1943.

And you were just ordered into a specific area, assigned a place to go to? What--

We were ordered to move to the outskirts a place like a wilderness called Srodula. All the Jews were ordered to leave home and take only what you could carry. And move into the ghetto, Srodula.

What were the living conditions like there?

The living conditions were very bad. We were assigned several families to one room. There were about 12 to 14 people in a room I think.

We had to move in with another family. And we shared beds, about three or four people in a bed.

And what about previous to the ghetto there were shortages of food. And I would imagine shortages of medicine and problems with sanitary conditions. How much worse were things in the ghetto?

They were much worse.

It was in the ghetto, one had the impression that they wanted to finish us off. The conditions were not as bad before. And we were not allowed outside the ghetto. There were barbed wires. There was no way of escaping from the ghetto.

Previous to being forced to go into the ghetto, between the time of the first selection in which your father was taken, were there other selections after that? Was this a regular thing? Or after that first selection, did they pretty much leave the community alone in that way, and just--

There was no such selection since 1942, not the same way. But the SS men and Gestapo would come to homes, directly to homes, and take people out, and mostly at night time.

Did they do this in concert with the Jewish Council? Was this something where they approached the Jewish Council and said we need 20 Jews and they had a list?

I think that they did work with the Jewish Council. Yes. Because they were-- sometimes one would hear that there was going to be-- it was called an [NON-ENGLISH] where they would take people from streets. Then one stayed home. And sometimes, if one had a friend in the Jewish Council, might warn us that there was something brewing or something will be going on and not to venture out.

So I think that they were more or less working together. The Jewish Council was probably informed about the Aktion and the [NON-ENGLISH] that were going to take place.

Describe for me what a typical day was like for you in the ghetto.

It was a lot of suffering every day on a daily basis. It was hard to see my mother losing so much weight. It was hard to listen to the cry of my younger sisters and brothers that they were hungry. And in general, life was desperate.

You were still 12, 13 years old. Were you forced to work? Were your older siblings forced to work? Was your mother forced to work? Or was there anything for you to do, or did you just-- we just-- I wasn't old enough to be forced to work. My two sisters were forced to work in a shop sewing uniforms for the Germans. And that's been going on for several months.

It was called Heldon, something like Heldon factory. And they would leave in the morning with guards, and be brought back to the ghetto by guards.

Were they compensated at all for this work?

No. There was no compensation.

Just forced to work. You mentioned that your brother Simon was taken away.

Yes.

This was after you were in the ghetto?

No. That was before the ghetto.

And where was Simon taken to?

He was taken to [NON-ENGLISH]. We used to receive letters from him, cards, regularly. In fact, when Simon was taken away, we used to be visited by Simon's meister, a German, who used to come. And when we still had some fur, like my mother's fur, then we would give him for his wife's a fur, so that he would treat our brother Simon well.

And he gave him some additional food. And Simon had a very good position with that German, and that's how Simon survived. But we also had another brother, Eliezer, who was taken to camp.

When was he taken?

He was taken-- soon after Simon I think. He was of a very delicate constitution. And he was very unhappy being in labor camp. And we received cards from him. And my mother was suffering because of that, because he said that he couldn't eat the treif food that they were giving him, and that work was extremely hard.

So my sister knew somebody in the council, the Jewish Council. And she went to him and tried to get Eliezer home, bring him home. At that time, we didn't know that things were not too-- had we left him in the labor camp, he might have survived.

Really?

We knew so little as to what was going on. The Germans mixed us up. If we knew at the time that Eliezer, if he stayed in the camp where he was, he may have had chances of surviving. But he was brought back home using a lot of influence and some monetary compensation. And as it turned out, he was killed in Auschwitz together with my mother and the younger siblings.

Were you aware of any underground or resistance activity taking place in the ghetto or outside of the ghetto?

We were not aware. Our family was not aware.

Once you were put into the ghetto, again, you were from a very religious family. Most of the people knew were very religious people. Did you still try and observe holidays? Did you still try and maintain some semblance of a religious life?

We did. We did most definitely in secrecy. In secrecy, there would be a special room where the Jews would get together for the high holidays, and also during the year as well. There was a--

What about were you able to observe Shabbat, or was that just too difficult? Did you save it for--

To a certain extent, my mother saved and baked challahs, not in the ghetto, but prior to the ghetto we did. In the ghetto, things became very bad.

OK. We'll stop for a tape change.

OK.

How long were you in the ghetto?

Just a few months.

Now, and your two sisters continued every day being taken to work and being brought back. Was there ever a time when any other members of your family were taken away? You mentioned Simon and Eliezer who Eliezer you managed to get back to you.

Yes.

But was the whole family pretty much intact or what?

The whole family was pretty much intact. Yes. There were two members of the family who had been taken.

Simon and your father?

Yes, and Eliezer.

And Eliezer.

And he came back home. He was brought back home.

Was the ghetto broken up in small portions? Did they just one day come in and decide to take people out on a transport or liquidate the ghetto? What happened to the ghetto?

First, my sisters didn't come home one day from work.

This was in '43?

That was in '43. They didn't come home to the ghetto. And we didn't know what happened. And we were told a few days later by the Jewish Council that they were taken to a labor camp straight from work. That was another blow.

But a few weeks later, we received a mail from them telling us where they were. We received postcards and asking for some clothes to be sent to them, which we did.

So that must have been somewhat of a relief, I mean, to hear from them.

That was a relief. Hearing from them meant that they were alive.

Where were they taken to?

They were taken to, at the time we didn't know. They gave us the address, Graeben.

That's what came on the card?

Yes.

And how long after that were you then taken from the ghetto and the ghetto was broken up?

Shortly after my sisters did not return home, one night two SS men came into our room at the ghetto, and woke us up with screams. And they came into the room. And they came to the bed where I was sleeping with my mother and two younger sisters. And they ordered me to get up and get dressed.

And my mother tried to hold me back. She didn't want to give me up. And the SS men pushed her away brutally. And I had to get dressed and go with them.

So you were taken separately?

I was taken separately.

What time of year was this? And this was still in '43.

That was '43.

Do you remember?

March of '43.

March of '43. How long had you been in the ghetto?

Probably a couple of months.

So it was a relatively short period of time.

Yes.

Where did they take you to?

They took us by bus with other girls, most of them were older than I. They may have been one which was the same age as I. And I don't know how long a journey it was. It was by bus. And we arrived at a certain place. We saw wooden barracks. And they ordered us to shower and get dressed. And at that time, I felt very forlorn, very unhappy.

I had no experience of being able to be on my own. I was always with the family. And then a girl came into the room, a Jewish girl.

Did you know any of these girls that you were taken with?

No. No, I didn't.

So you really were completely alone.

I was alone.

You mentioned that most of the girls were your age.

Yes.

So they were all around 13, 14 years old, something like?

17, 18, 20.

Did you look older than your age, because 13 is awfully young?

Yes. I don't know. I think I was average looking.

So once you got to this place and you said a girl came into the room, a Jewish girl came into the room.

Yeah, I might-- they might have thought that I was older. And she said, when they were asking for news from home, from Sosnowiec, and they were asking how are things in Sosnowiec. And they asked me what my name was. And I said Sally, Sally Zielinska.

And they said, Zielinska, you have two sisters? I said, yes. So I was told that my sisters were there. And they happened to be at work during the day. The girl who I was talking to worked night shift, so she was in the barracks at the time when they brought our transport to Graeben.

I was overwhelmed to find out that my older sisters were there. And naturally, I was very happy that I would have somebody of the family. And a few hours later, they came home from work. And they embraced me. And they were extremely happy to see me.

Now--

They were happy and unhappy, naturally, that I was taken away, but happy that I would be with them.

What about the rest of your family, your mother, your brothers, your younger sisters?

My mother and my two younger sisters, my younger brother, and the two older brothers were still in the ghetto.

Were you able to send them any note telling them where you were?

We went allowed to write.

Were they allowed to write to you?

In fact, I have some postcards with me, which we received from them.

So you were able to keep in touch for how long?

Up until about June or July. They would send us packages still and clothes.

This is still of 1943?

'43. And news about home, what was going on. And in the cards my older brother, Mayer, Hirsh Mayer, we would have a motto, a kind of a sign. When he said that he has headaches, then we would know that they were taking people away from the ghetto. So he was able in code to let you know what was really happening.

Yes, because the mail was going through a strict censorship.

When the cards and the packages quit coming, that summer of 1943, what had happened? You don't know?

We knew there was something bad. We knew that something happened. And there was talk of Judenrein, especially near

the German border. We guessed that they liquidated the ghetto.

Did you know at that time once you were in the camp, what was going on at places like Auschwitz, what was going on with these liquidations, these special Aktions? Did you have any idea what that meant or did you just think that maybe they were taken to another similar type of a place that you were at?

We thought that they were taken to places. We didn't know. Until some girls came to our camp from Auschwitz, and that was in the beginning of '45. They sent a few girls with shaven heads to our camp. And they were talking at night, and we just overheard. And they said, they are so naive. They don't know what's going on.

So some girls who were awake would tell the other girls. And we had no idea.

So until 1945, you really--

No. We didn't know that they were gassing and burning people, our family.

Do you think the fact that you didn't know that helped you to survive in a way? Do you think if you knew that, that it would have affected your will to survive and to live?

I am sure of that because after the liberation I had no will to live because the pain of finding out that my family was killed was so intense, and was so tragic that I didn't want to eat. I was crying constantly. And in a way, I was in a way sorry that I survived. Because life was very hard.

Too much of a burden.

It was too hard. It wasn't worthwhile to survive. That's what I felt. It wasn't. And for a while I just cried all the time. But my older sisters and brothers--

They took care of you?

--felt that they had to be stronger. In retrospect, I think in those terms. But in those days, I didn't. I just thought that they were stronger, but they had to be stronger for my sake.

Getting back to Graeben, what were conditions like there?

In Graeben, we worked in a flax factory.

A flax factory?

Flax, which is the raw material before it goes to knitting mills to manufacture fabrics. The yarn is made from flax.

What kind of hours were you working?

We worked 12 hours a day.

And what were you fed?

We were fed two slices of bread and a bowl of soup, potatoes and turnips, kohlrabi.

How often a day? Once a day, twice a day?

We were given the bread after work. So one would eat a slice in the evening, and take a slice to work for the following day. And the soup was given after work.

What were the sanitary conditions like there?

The sanitary conditions were not bad. The barracks were new. They were built new. And there were showers, communal showers, showers were taken daily. And we had a little cupboard kind of for each person. There were 16 girls to a room. And I was able to share the room with my sisters.

What about medical conditions there?

There was no doctor. There was just a dentist, a lady dentist chosen among the women, the Jewish women. And when one had a toothache, the tooth was pulled out. And when someone got sick from hard work and malnutrition, one would be sent to Auschwitz. At that time, we found out that they were sending people to Auschwitz.

But you still had no idea what was going on?

Not really.

So in this particular camp, nobody was being killed?

No.

If somebody got sick, they just were sent away and replaced by someone else.

Right.

Work was hard. But we kept up our spirit. We were very young. And on Sunday when there was no work, we got together telling stories. We made some slice of bread to make it look like chocolate. And we just consoled one another, hoping that one day we will survive and be free and be united with the families.

How many women were in this camp?

About 200, and I think later they brought about 50 more.

All Jewish?

They were all Jewish, about 250 I think.

Who administered the camp? Was it SS? Was it--

It was administered by German-- two German ladies and SS. And there were barbed wires. And we were led into the camp after work. And we had a roll call in the morning. We were counted. And we were given numbers. That we were called by the number by the Germans. And there was one Jewish lady, a tall lady, selected to be in charge as well.

In the camp, were you ever the victim of torture, physical abuse of any sort?

Yes. I was beaten by the leader of the camp, the German lady.

Why were you beaten? Were beating something that were done on a regular basis, or was this--

It wasn't done on a regular basis. No. Life was pretty bearable at that camp. We had the impression that they wanted us to work and obey orders. But when they would find out that one would talk to non-Jews at work, even so we never approached anyone. But if the non-Jews who worked in the same factory would talk to a Jewish person, then the Jewish person would get punished, sent away or beaten. And I was punished one day.

At work, my sister, my older sister was very extremely attractive, my older sister Edzia. And there was one

Czechoslovakia man who used to look at her, even though there was no contact possible. There was no contact possible. And we working upstairs. And he would walk by a large hall, and just look up. And one day he slipped a note on the platform where my other sister was working, and made a drawing of benches, and a package underneath that looked like a package underneath.

And at those benches we used to have our lunch, the slice of bread which we took to work. And my little sister who was working on wagons, pushing wagons into the furnace, had a moving around job, whereas I and my older sister had standing jobs.

So while she was pushing the wagons, she would go away to the benches where we were eating lunch, and see what he meant. And then she found out that there was a package with bread. He took pity on us, and he left that bread for us.

So we had the additional bread. And happened on several occasions.

Was this the first time that a non-Jew had shown this type of compassion toward you?

There were other girls who were helped also in a similar way, not many, but there was one or two. And getting back to why I was punished. Word got around that the Zielinski sisters had additional food. We don't know how. Someone denounced us.

But I was working the night shift. Because my sisters were working the day shift. That was the day shift my sisters were assigned to a harder kind of work than I was. At that time, I was working separately from my sisters, an easy kind of a job because of my age.

And one night, I was awakened by the German LagerfÃ¼hrer and the Jewish lady, waking me up and asking me where is the bread. Where is the bread? And they asked me to open the cupboard that we had a little cupboard. And they searched. I said, I don't have any bread. And they searched and didn't find any addition bread. We were lucky that the previous evening, we ate all the bread up. Sometimes we would leave some bread.

At that stage, the German lady slapped me in the face several times. And my cheeks swelled up enormously for a few days. It was like a balloon. It was a very degrading and painful experience.

Was that the only time something like that had happened to you?

Yes.

We need to change tapes.

OK. OK.

Again in Graeben, I would imagine that there was a mixture of the type of Jewish Women and girls who were there, some who were probably from a secular background, others from a religious background, and probably many who at that point didn't really care any more one way or another what they were. But was there an attempt to try and maintain any sort of tradition there?

There was. Saturdays, we tried as much as possible when we could, just take to take it easy in the evening, and not to do our own laundry, our own. And somehow, we found out when it was Yom Kippur. I don't know how it was found out. But we did find out when. And we fasted.

I've been fasting Yom Kippur since I was a little girl, and I still do. And that's my recollection.

So even then with all the deprivations, you still fasted on Yom Kippur.

Yes. Yes.

Were you getting any news from the outside world? Did you have any idea how the war effort was going for the Germans? Did you know that the tide had been turned against them?

We didn't know anything. Since we were not allowed to talk to people who had contact with the outside world.

So you had no idea?

We, at times the meisters at work, the German meisters were very cruel. Our work was very, very hard. One had to bend down constantly to pick up flax, bend down all day long, and put it on a higher running belt. And you had to keep up, or else they would shout, and hit. And we found out. We thought that when they were in a bad mood that things were going very bad for them on the front.

And that was perhaps the latter part of 1944.

Was there a point that things then changed drastically at Graeben? Because you mentioned that for the most part you worked, and it wasn't as bad as it could have been.

Yes.

Did things ever change there?

They didn't change a great deal. But people who got sick were sent away. And we were getting the same amount of food.

How long did you remain in Graeben?

Until January '45.

And what happened then?

At that time, they told us to assemble, and not to take anything with us. And that we're going to leave the camp.

Did you know why?

We found out that the Russian army is getting nearer to that part of Germany. That the Russians are pushing ahead. And that's why they drove us out of the camp.

Knowing that the Russians were pushing that close must have given you some sort of hope that maybe this was going to end soon for you.

Yes, it did. It did. We were elated that there is a turning point. But that didn't last too long. Because--

When you say didn't last too long, I mean--

Because they drove us out on foot in the freezing weather, walking for days without any food, and marching. We didn't know where they were taking us.

What happened if you couldn't march, or if you stumbled, or if you just got ill?

Those who couldn't go on were shot on the spot. Now, the three sisters, we took turns. If one saw that the other one was weak, then we took her to the middle. And we just dragged her a bit. And--

Outside of the time that you had been beaten by this one German guard, you really had not seen that type of brutality,

people being shot on the spot like that.

No.

What did that do to you? Again, you were 14, 15 years old. So you're still a relatively young person.

Yes. At that time one had thought of just going on. They want us to go on. You go on. The survival instinct at that time took precedence over everything.

So you just shut it out as best as you could.

It seemed that way.

Where were you taken to?

We were, later on, we were put on cattle trains. And they gave us a little food on the train. And--

Was this an open cattle car or closed?

Open cattle car. And we were just-- we had just enough room for standing position we couldn't sit down. And it was day and night. And next door to us were some men also. And they said that they were lying on top, standing on top of dead bodies in the train. That did not take place in our train, just one wagon.

But it was extremely hard just to stand, not being able to sit down. They took us to a camp called Bergen-Belsen.

How long did that transport take?

Days. I'm not quite sure now how long it was.

It was than a day?

Oh, yes.

Less than a week?

Possibly. Maybe within the week, or maybe give or take a day or two. I'm not quite sure.

You arrived at Bergen-Belsen in what kind of condition?

We arrived in a horrible exhausted condition. We were just barely alive. And we were ordered to shower, and to give up our clothes. So that was something emotional, very important to us that we still had clothes from home.

So you were, all through Graeben, you weren't wearing uniforms. You were wearing just your regular clothes.

Yes, and we made, we were-- my family sent us sheets. And we made pants out of sheets. There were some girls who could sew to keep warm. But it was our own clothes from home. So you had to give your clothes up and what were you given in their stead?

Other clothes, horrible, horrible clothes.

Were they uniforms, or just--

Other-- not uniforms, no.

How many of you from Graeben survived that death march and then the subsequent transport?

I think perhaps from 250 maybe 150 survived, possibly--

So you lost about 100 people?

Yes.

And you're still with your two sisters at Bergen-Belsen.

Yes.

You're herded into showers, and you give up your clothes for other clothes, horrible clothes. Then what happened to you? Were you taken to a bunk? What did they do?

They took us to a room, 150 all in one room. And the conditions were just unbearable. They did give us some food then, soup, I think.

Did you come into contact with other people who had been in Bergen-Belsen for a long time, or were you still just your group was--

We were, for a day or two we were in the group. Until one day at roll call, a lady, a Jewish lady who was in charge of that group and several other groups, who was about my older sister's age, my older sister Esther's age, said to my sister, wait till after the roll call. She recognized her. She was from Sosnowiec.

And she says, wait for me. And she later contacted us. And she was in a position where she could help. And she was healthy, because she had gone through Auschwitz. And those strong ones were made OberfÃ¼hrer to watch over the others, to take care of the others.

So this lady took us out of that room, and she took us into a place where we were allowed to have bunks. So we had sleeping quarters, two in a bed. And she also assigned us to work. And that was a great help. Because when you work, you were able to exchange what you had from work for food. My sisters--

What kind of work?

Just to sort out clothes from the new arrivals. My sister Esther and Manya were assigned to sort out clothes. And I was assigned to work in the kitchen by this lady.

So having work like this which gave you an ability to get some extra food--

That gave us the opportunity to get some extra food. My sisters would take out clothes, put on two sweaters, one on top of the other. And there was a kind of a black market going on, not a black market for monetary compensation, but exchanging, swapping things. Would give a person a sweater, and the person would give you a slice of bread.

I worked in the kitchen. I would risk my life and smuggle some potatoes in my coat, so that I would bring the potatoes. So we shared that. So we had extra food in Bergen-Belsen.

Compared to Graeben though, it was a much different type of an existence for you.

It was a horrible place to be. And it was-- one saw piles of corpses when attending to the human needs, was terrible. It was dirt and filth, and it was chaos. And it was just the fight to survive.

What kinds of things did you witness there that you had not witnessed in Graeben?

I witnessed a man being shot on the spot while going into work to the kitchen. There was a pile of potatoes in front of the kitchen door where I was working. And a German guard with a rifle was guarding the potatoes. And a man in a striped uniform bent down to pick up a potato. And the German guard shot him on the spot.

And I was appalled. I just couldn't believe that a man could be so cruel to shoot a man. That man knew he was risking his life. But I didn't think that he had to shoot him. He could have just told him to go away. And I felt that perhaps this guard was born out of a stone, that no mother gave birth to such a person.

What about the sanitary conditions in Bergen-Belsen as compared to Graeben or the ghetto that you had been in? You couldn't go into the toilet because it was overflowing with human feces. You couldn't attend to your bodily functions. It was a horrible existence. Had it taken a few days later, I don't think any one of us would have survived. There was a lot of sickness.

There was a lot of sickness. There was typhus, dysentery, high fever. And I got extremely sick--

With typhus.

With typhus, so they had to take me to the hospital. And that meant who couldn't take care of yourself that it's certain death. And my sister, my older sister used to come and visit me after work, and bring some food to me, risking her life getting in. But there was one experience I'll never forget in my life. Is when I--

This is before or after you were ill?

During my illness.

During your illness.

Yes. At the revere, at the hospital. I got up. I don't know how. People didn't attend to their bodily functions outside their bed. They did. But at one time, I saw that I couldn't do it. And I had to go out of-- get up off the bed and go outside. And it was dark. And I saw something in front of me. And I must have fallen. I don't know how long I was lying there.

But I felt there was some-- I was touching human bodies. And what happened was that I fell near on top a pile of corpses that were going to be cremated. I don't know how I gave it my strength, but I just lifted myself up realizing what was going on. I must have lost consciousness I think. But then when I came back, when I regained my consciousness and I saw where I was, I give it all my strength and picked myself up, and somehow crawled away.

If I had not done that, I would have been cremated with the corpses that I was near, on top of the corpses.

And again, we're talking about somebody who wasn't even 15 years old yet.

Right.

Going through this experience. Why do you feel you survived? I mean you could have very easily, very easily had lost consciousness and been cremated with those corpses. What do you think it was that enabled you to survive the typhus, to get out of that particular situation, to survive the death march?

I don't think my will to survive was that strong looking back. I think that I survived because of my older sisters. My older sisters helped me. They risked their lives. When I came out of the hospital, they did a little bit of cooking on the outside. And my sister, Esther, was like a mother to me.

How much older was Esther than you? She is about eight years older.

So she really became a mother figure for you?

Yes, yes, during the war and after the war too.

Did your sisters get ill from this typhus outbreak?

Yes. My sister Manya had a mild case. But my sister Edzia, finally when she saw that I was getting better, then she dropped. And she got very ill. And she didn't know what was going on even when the English army liberated Bergen-Belsen.

When were you liberated?

We were liberated, I think it was April or May. I'm not quite sure.

Of '45?

'45.

Did you know at that time that you were soon going to be liberated? Did you know by this point that the Germans had lost the war?

No. We didn't know. We were suffering so much. We were just so down, our morale, our even we didn't know what was going on.

What do you recall of the liberation?

The liberation, I recall that girls came into our room, our barracks, and said the English are here and the war is ended. Naturally, we were all-- we had to go out to see it because-- and I said to my-- I didn't dare do anything before I talked to my sister because she took care of me. And I said to my sister, Esther, Edzia we called her. The war is over. The English are here. The English army is here. But it didn't seem to make any difference to her. It didn't register.

At that time, I realized that she was worse off and more sick than I realized. And she was just lying there in bed. And then I thought that I would go out. I heard that the English soldiers were throwing chocolates and packages onto the people of the camp. And I thought that I would go out and try and get some food and help her.

But I tried to catch some of the packages which they were throwing. But I was too weak to catch. The others were stronger and taller. And I felt so ashamed to go back without any food to help my sister. Then I saw a pile of turnips. And I bent down barely, and picked up a turnip. Then I came walking in with two turnips. And my sisters are still making fun of me. They said, Sally went out to get some goodies. And she came back with turnips.

Were you able to get medical--

Excuse me.

Oh, OK.

OK. Were you able to get medical attention right away?

Some of us were sent to Sweden to recuperate. Some of us there was no medical help that I can think of.

I mean did the British liberators, was there any medics or doctors among them that had something to help treat the typhus?

See, we were quarantined. And we don't know what they tried to do. They gave us food. That I remember they did. But they didn't open a hospital to take the sick people in, not in Bergen-Belsen, not while we were still there.

What do you recall was the attitude of your English liberators? Many of them really didn't know what they were walking into. Were they extremely sympathetic? Were they shocked? How did you find them?

They were shocked. They were helpful. But we heard that the Russians who liberated camps were much more helpful, and the Americans were much more helpful than the English were. The English, we ourselves thought that they took it in cold blood, like their expression didn't change that much. They didn't show as much compassion as we thought they should have shown.

And when we exchanged, when we went to the American side, when we found out that my brothers were in Buchenwald, the Americans seemed to be much more compassionate and more understanding than the English.

How quickly did you find out that your brothers were in Buchenwald? How quickly did you find out about them?

In fact, my sister's state of health did not improve until we-- I told her that our brother Simon was in Bergen-Belsen. And he was on just a few miles away.

So he was in Bergen-Belsen.

He was in Bergen-Belsen.

And you didn't know that up until the liberation?

He was near-- yes, and they were not quarantined because they had just arrived from their camp. And he wasn't sick. But they were not allowed to come into our area because we were quarantined.

Were you allowed to go to him?

So we were allowed-- he came with a cart and horses and took us out of the camp. He and some friends of his.

Finding him after all that time, you feel did that help your sister get over the illness?

Yes, that helped her. She improved dramatically. And he just took us out of there. And we never went back to that place.

Now, you had not seen Simon since 1942. It had been three years. Did he know anything about the rest of the family? When did you find out about your other brothers, your other sisters, your parents? What was the process?

When we were liberated, naturally, we thought the next stage would be to be reunited with the family, with my mother, and the younger sisters, and the two sisters, and the brother, and the two older brothers who stayed in the ghetto. And there were centers set up for the survivors to register, certain like the UNRAA, the Joint Jewish Distribution Center. So we registered.

And after several days, we received news that my two brothers, Nathan and Isaac, were alive, that they were in Buchenwald. But we didn't get any word from the other members of the family.

Now, let me just ask you this. At this point, had already learned what the truth was about Auschwitz and the other camps?

Just about. That was the time where we found out, because there were inmates of Auschwitz. And they were talking freely already about it. They didn't want to shock us when we were in Graeben. But they were talking freely, and they told us about the horrors, and the way. So the liberation, in fact, was a happy event. The war is over. We survived.

Now, Simon, where did he-- he'd taken you three in this cart to where?

He took us to a German, the German population was ordered to give a part of their homes to some of the convicts. We

were convicts. So we lived in a room kind of, with my brothers.

By this point, you'd already located Isaac and Nathan.

And then later we found out. So we took a ride by train, which took some time to Buchenwald. And that was-- they were in the camp still. And we moved in there. But naturally, conditions were not like during the war.

So that was sort of like a DP camp then?

It was like a DP camp. Yes.

So there were now six of you.

There were six of us.

And you're still trying to find out what happened to the rest of the family.

Yes. We have not given up the search for my two older brothers. My sister thought that they should have survived. We knew h what the fate was.

This was Hirsh Mayer.

Hirsh Mayer and Eliezer.

And Eliezer.

We knew already what the fate was of the older people and the children. But they were in their prime of life.

So at this point, you knew what had happened to your parents and to your younger sisters.

Still, we had actually from Sosnowiec, they took the entire Jewish community from the ghetto to Auschwitz. We know that. We found that out. But some of the able bodies in Auschwitz were selected for work. But some who perhaps had no will to survive, which we think my two older brothers didn't want to be separated from my mother. So they took over the responsibility of my father. So they didn't want to be separated from my mother and the younger siblings.

So they probably went with them. They didn't try to save themselves. They just wanted to be with the family.

You've never had confirmation one way or another of what happened?

No. No. For years, we've been trying all over. I lived in Australia. We went to Australia first. And while we were in Germany, and wherever we were, we put in ads in papers. And we were still hoping. But--

This is something you've had to live with since the liberation?

Yes. The liberation was I think to be happy about. But the tragedy to find out that my family was killed just overshadowed the liberation. It just didn't-- the meaning of the liberation would have been if my family survived, it would have been liberation. But I feel that we were never, never liberated, that we lived with the tragedy. And it's a never-ending tragedy, and especially some thoughts of my father's are haunting me.

Still today?

And are always with me that he said children, Churchill and Roosevelt will not let these atrocities go on. They will come to our help. And I feel the way he was thinking when he was led to his death, these thoughts that he was disappointed.

Do you--

And we were let down. And it's just nobody seemed to care.

Are you angry or bitter that the world turned its back on you and other Jews?

If a brother of you or your parents get killed, and other people stand by inactively and don't care, what would you think? And I feel personally that the free leaders of the world could have saved my family and millions of other families if they cared, especially when they found out what was going on.

In '42, we learned more about the history. We know more of what was going on. While we were shut off from the world we were trapped. But there were people on the outside who should have cared about us, who should not let such a demon, a tyrant, organize so many millions of German people helped to kill us. I think the free world should have cared.

How did you pick up the pieces? Here you were, when you were liberated your birthday's in October. So you were 14 and 1/2 years old.

Yes.

How did you pick up the pieces and start your life over again?

Actually, we were among the fortunate.

I mean you were--

That six of us survived.

Six of you survived. So you had at least, and you mentioned before that Esther, your sister Esther, really took care of you.

She took care of me and my brothers then took over the responsibility of providing and caring, and we started celebrating Friday night. We were like a family, a broken family.

So even after everything you went through, you didn't lose faith in God. You still continued throughout the war. I mean you mentioned you fasted throughout.

Yes, yes.

But even afterwards, you tried to go back to those traditions.

We tried to go back. We believed in a supreme power. We also, staying there for the memory of our parents, which they instilled in us. It's in our blood. But we questioned. We question still, why?

How long did you remain in the DP camp?

Actually, we remained in the camp in Landsberg. We went then to Landsberg. Because the Russians were taking over certain parts of Germany where they split up Germany.

Right.

Buchenwald was given over by the Americans to the Russians. So we didn't want to stay under the Russians. So we left to Bavaria. And we could move around freely. But we wanted to stay with our own people. So we were in a DP camp.

We had no means of supporting ourselves. So since each one of us was too young to have a profession or trade, and there were schools set up, old school. I learned to be a dental technician. My sisters learned to sew men's shirts. Hoping that one day when we leave Germany-- we wanted to leave Germany. We would never remain Germany. We intended to go to America.

So that was always the intention?

Yes. We intended to go to Israel or America. My brothers, we felt that we had suffered so much. We had enough of wars. And we couldn't get legally into Israel. They would send the people who left for Israel to Cyprus. Again, barbed wires. So we felt at this stage we didn't want to do that. We wanted to go to America.

In fact, we received papers from our cousin from New York. But my brother's friends were taken to the Korean War. So we had so much, we had such a dose of the war that we decided that we wouldn't go neither to Israel nor to America. We'd go to Australia.

When did you go to Australia?

In '51.

So you were in Germany from '45 to '51?

Till '51. Yes. And I actually resumed my education and the older members of the family took over the supporting part. And the younger, my brother and I, my brother became a dentist. And I wanted to be a dentist. But I was too soft for that type of work I found out. And so I became a dental technician and a bookkeeper.

You remained-- and now all six of you went to Australia?

No. We lost one brother in a car accident in Germany. And the five of us went to Australia.

And then you were in Australia till what year?

I was-- life in Australia was completely different than what we expected. So my sister left. And we went to Australia in '51. It's a good, beautiful country. We were happy there. And each one of us was self-supporting. But my older sister thought that she would be happier in America. So she left for America and married an American in New York. And my brother and I went for a trip to America.

And we worked our way up financially. And I stayed in America, in New York for a couple of years. And there I met my husband who was born in this country, in Hartford, Connecticut.

So he's not a survivor?

He's not a survivor.

American Jew born here.

American Jew born here, yes.

Which brother did you lose in the car accident?

Izzy.

Izzy, and then the brother who became a dentist who you came here with was?

Nathan.

Nathan.

Nathan.

So you married in--

I married in '59, June 13, '59.

And you remained on the East Coast for a while? Or did you come down to the--

I remained but I thought that we would be happier in Australia. And I begged my husband to go back. Because life in Australia was much better somehow. I wasn't happy in New York. It was, the tempo was too fast. And since I've experienced a better life in Australia, my husband agreed to go with me to Australia. And we settled in Australia. We stayed there for-- when my husband got a bit homesick or things didn't work out the way we expected them to work out financially, and we came back to the United States.

And we resumed our life here.

In Los Angeles?

In Los Angeles. Yes.

And you had children?

Yes.

And you now are a grandmother for the first time as well?

Yes. Yes. We had two daughters. And unfortunately, we lost our older daughter in 1986. Now, that was another big tragedy how to cope with. And a year later, my younger daughter, Rosalind, married. And in '87, she married. And we became grandparents of a beautiful grandchild, Nicole Jacqueline, which was my older daughter's name, Jacqueline.

And today, of the six of you that survived the war together, who is left?

There is only three of us left. In the late '50s, I lost my sister Manya in Australia, a natural death, cancer. And in '81, I lost my brother, Nathan, who went to a Holocaust reunion to Israel. He and his wife went. And on his way back home to the airport in Tel Aviv, he was killed in a taxi, in a car accident, in an accident.

So today, it's you, Esther.

And Simon.

And Simon.

Simon lives in Australia. And Esther and I live here.

Live in Los Angeles. We live close to one another.

I know this wasn't easy for you to come in and to do this, something that you had said you couldn't have done probably even a year ago.

No.

Why did you? And I know it's been difficult for you to do this even having made that decision. Why did you decide to do this?

It was extremely difficult for me. And I was hoping that I wouldn't break down. And I tried very hard to use my reasoning, because the testimony I'm giving now, I feel that I should be doing. I wouldn't feel right leaving this world without giving the testimony for two reasons.

I would like not to defame the memory of my family who were killed by the Nazis. And I hear that some historical revisionists are already saying that the Holocaust didn't happen. And if they're saying this during my lifetime, what will history write down about my family, and the 6 million?

And I feel I would like the world to learn a lesson from our experiences, to care for human life, and not to let people kill other people for no reason, just simply because they are born of a different religion, a different race, a different creed. And to care for human rights. I hope that my testimony, if it helps people to learn in any way from my experiences, and I feel I would be guilty leaving this world not telling my story.

The last question that I want to ask you, are you ever concerned or do you have fear that another Holocaust could happen?

I'm going back to when Nasser was in power. And when he said that he would drive the Jews into the Red Sea, I said to my husband, there's going to be another Holocaust. I said, if there will be no Israel, there will be no Jews. There will be nowhere to go, like during the war. And I was frantic.

And my husband who was born in this country said, don't worry, Sally. The shoe will be on the other foot. In simple terms, the shoe will be on the other foot soon. And sure enough, things have changed. I feel that there is-- when I first met my husband, he didn't think that a state of Israel was that important. And I had talks with him often. And I told them that if we had a country, and if the British allowed us into our country, which should have been our country, rightfully so, my family would not have died.

And now, when I hear about anti-Semitic outbursts and signs of swastikas on synagogues in this country, shudders go through me. And I get scared, and I'm very afraid. And I'm hoping that it will not get to such stages the way it got in Europe. And I'm hoping that the first signs of any tyrant who threatens people that the rest of the world would take steps to deal with such a tyrant accordingly.

Is that the most important lesson of the Holocaust to you?

I think so. Inactivity and apathy would lead to the destruction of any people if the rest of the world doesn't care.

Mrs. Roisman, I really appreciate you coming in and taking the time to give your testimony. And on behalf of the center, thank you very much.

Thank you for having me.

OK.

OK.

OK, so Mrs. Roisman, who is this in this picture here?

This is my oldest brother, Hirsh Mayer.

And about what year was that taken?

I think this must have been taken about 1940.

So when he was taken away in '43--

He stayed. '43, we were not home.

Yeah, when the ghetto was liquidated.

Yes.

How old was he, roughly?

He was probably 24 or 25, or 26, between 24 and 26.

And then this photo here?

This is my next-oldest brother, Eliezer.

And was that picture taken around the same time as the one of Hirsh Mayer.

At the same time and he is about 18 months younger than Hirsh Mayer.

So he was around 24?

Something like that.

And then this photo here?

That is a photo of mine. That's me. And this was taken about '47, '48.

So, you'd already regained your strength, your weight?

Yes.

We have two documents here. If you could describe what those are and what the significance is of them historically.

Those are postcards written to us by my older brother, Hirsh Mayer sent to our camp, Graeben. Our last name was Zielinski, and we were able to get mail because the Germans didn't know that we were of Jewish origin.

But lately--

That was an unusual name for a Jew to have?

It was a very unusual name for a Jew to have.

And lately, the Germans ordered an addition to the first name and middle name for men, Israel, and for women, Sarah. So that they would recognize the Jewish male. And this says Israel for the brother who is writing it to Malka Sarah, my middle sister.

So right here, Malka Sarah.

Zielinski.

Zielinski. And up here, M--

Mayer.

Mayer Israel--

Israel

Zielinski.

Zielinski, yes.

This card here was sent a little bit earlier because the Israel isn't.

Yes, yes. He also gave us news about the happenings back home in Sosnowiec. When there were selections taking place, we had an understanding that he would say that he has a headache. If he stated that it was a selection taking place, we probably would not get the card. So the headache signified that a selection has taken place.

OK, and then-- this final photo here. Describe who's in the photo.

Yes. On the left side is my sister, Esther. In the center is my brother, Simon, who lives in Australia. My sister Esther lives in Los Angeles, quite close to where I live. And on the other side is myself.

And those are the three of you that remain.

The three of us who survived to date.