

Good morning, Nancy.

Morning.

We're glad that you could come down this morning to do this.

Thank you. I'm glad to be here.

To start with, we would like you to state your full name, and your maiden name, and where you were born.

My name is Nancy Fordonski, born Nacha Lipsitz. I was born in Poland, Zloczew, which is near Sieradz. And the state, it's large.

Can you tell us your parents' names and how many people were in your family, in your immediate family?

My father's name was Abram Shmuel. My mother was Sara. My older sister was Rivka, and Luba, Tova. I have a brother, [PERSONAL NAME], Jack, and a sister, Cesza, another brother Herschwald, Golda, Madzia, and Naomi. There were 10 children.

10 children, any of your sister and brothers survive?

I have a brother. My brother survived. My oldest brother survived, Jack Lipton. He lives in Bloomfield, Michigan. And my sister Sylvia Feld, she's in Southfield, Michigan. And I come from Oak Park, Michigan. I'm just here as a winter visitor.

What kind of school did you go to? Did you attend public school?

Yes. We have, in our city, a public school. This was together with Polish kids. And after school-- we had school from 8:00 in the morning till 1:00. And in the afternoon, we had Hebrew school. But the public school was together with Gentile kids.

Did you have a good relationship with the non-Jewish kids?

You see, I really cannot say that the relationship was good. Because growing up in Poland, you know, it was a-- we had many antisemites there. And it was a Christian country. And we know very well that they didn't like us. So we were trying very hard to get along with them, but they didn't like us.

Did you actually feel it as a child in school that you were different or that you were persecuted?

I can recall even just one incident. On Saturday, we didn't go to school. Just the Gentile kids had school. So once in a while, we used to wait for them when they went out from-- when they were dismissed. So we went, you know, in front of the school, wait for them until they got out to ask them we have any homework over the weekend.

So one of them jumped out. He said [POLISH], you dirty Jew. If you didn't go to school, it means that you don't know what homework you have. And this way you will flunk the test.

You mean there was a school on Saturdays?

Yes.

[INAUDIBLE]

They had school on Saturday, yes. We didn't, you know, being Jewish. So--

You didn't attend.

--we didn't attend, but there was school on Saturdays. I cannot say that all of them were like this, but, you know, something like this sticks out in your mind.

Yeah.

Being with them all week, you're going together and living together. So that's how much they liked us.

What type of profession did your father have? What kind of home life did you have?

We were pretty well-off. My parents had a leather goods business. And we had an apartment building.

So you had a comfortable life.

We had a comfortable, yes, life. That what I would say.

And were you a close knit family?

Very much so, very much so, very devoted to each other. Yes.

So life was pretty comfortable for you then.

Yes. But you see, my father was very well-known in the city. First of all, he was a councilman in the city. And in Europe, maybe you know that your people had to be taxed to pay their income tax, yes? So my father was on the board of it. And this was not in Zloczew where I was born. This was in Sieradz where it was the county.

I see.

Yes. And besides this, he was very well-knowns in the city because he was in charge mostly of the Jewish community. Like whatever was going on in the city, it was always-- mostly there were meetings in our house. So a few other members got together. And they were talking over what to do, and how to do it, and how it should be done.

Like if they had to build or rebuild a mikvah-- this is a ritual bath. So my father was in charge of it. Or there were other important things to be done in the city. So there were always meetings in our house talking over things, how to do, what to do it, and how everything should be done. So it was quite a house with going and come.

Was this strictly a Jewish council, or was it the county council where non-Jews and Jews made decisions together?

Yes, there were non-Jews and Jews together. There was one place. They were meeting in Sieradz. And everything was decided there, yes. And my father was one.

I can't recall there were any Jewish people from other cities which were coming into Sieradz, also. But my father was the only one from Zloczew that he attended the meetings.

Well, it's gratifying to know that a Jewish person could sit in on a county seat like that.

Yes. And besides this, he was on the board in the public schools. Yes.

When did you actually feel the war coming? Or were there some signs of problems coming out? When did you--

See, my brother Sulik, my mother, alav ha-sholom, used to call him Israel-- he was in the army. He was in the Polish cavalry. So once he came home-- it was just before the war. He came home on--

On leave?

--on leave. So he mentioned at home that it's something brewing. But to children, it seems like excitement. If you hear about, oh, there's going to be a war or what, so it was like nothing to it.

But you know, there was just thoughts that growing up in a very Orthodox home. I come from a very religious home. So how it's going to be, you know? When a war is, we can still be together? Or one will be here? Or we'll still be able to keep kosher? Something like this was going through your mind, but not that such a tragedy is on the way for us.

Yeah. How long was your father able to serve on the council, till what year?

He was till the end.

Till the end?

Till the war broke out.

Which was in 1939?

September 1939.

Then was there chaos, or was he dismissed from this council?

You see, when the war broke out, everything was so suddenly that nobody was getting any notice. And we lived very close to the border. It was-- I don't know-- between 12 and 15 kilometers.

So on Friday morning, we heard already that the troops, the German troops, are crossing the borders. But it was still slowly. Like in a small city, it isn't like here with television and with radios. Everything was coming in slowly.

So as the day was going on, it was Friday. And my mother and my older sister, they were still preparing everything for Shabbos, for Sabbath. And like, oh, maybe it will still take a while, maybe still take time. Let's still enjoy the Shabbos, the Sabbath.

And that's what's going on until the evening. And then at sundown, my father went to the synagogue for his Sabbath prayers. But we hear already that not just that they crossed the border, but they are already pretty near us, pretty near the city.

So like usually on Friday, my mother, alav ha-sholom, she lit the candles. And everything was set like a Shabbos table, set table, should look. And my father went to the synagogue. Right when he came home, he made kiddush. This is the Sabbath prayer.

Prayer.

And we sat down just like to say a [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH] just to say the blessings. And my father and mother were starting to talk about it. That's no use that we should sit down, sit and enjoy the meal, because the Germans might be in any minute and my father being so well-known in the city.

And so we really got scared that, God forbid, we shouldn't fall into a trap too soon. So we left everything just like the table was set just after making kiddush and making the [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH] the blessing. And everything was left.

You didn't eat the meal?

We didn't have the meal even, just picked up some things and a piece of, luggage however it was, and a few bags and left the house. Because this was, like I mentioned earlier, my father said when they should March in and we should still sit here at the table or be home, we might be the first victims. So we left everything and left the city. We went away for two, three days just walking away from the city.

Walking on foot?

Walking on foot. And right on the 1st of September, 1939, on Friday night, we left our home. When we left it was already, I don't know, like before midnight or so. And we left to the nearby city just to get away. And we stayed there for two days.

And the Germans marched in in the night. And lucky for us that we were not home anymore. So my father stayed on in that city. This was in Sieradz.

And Sieradz was not occupied by the Germans?

You see they came in to Sieradz, too. But nobody knew us.

Oh, I see.

This was the reason that we went, that we left the city, that nobody could point out. You see, this is Abram Shmuel Lipszyc. And everybody knows him. And he was like the leader from the Jewish community. And he was even-- with the Polish population, he was very good. And they were looking for people like him.

Yes.

So my father left, stayed hidden in a place where we made-- you know, we had a little place there. My father was supposed to stay on there like in a park or whatever where nobody would really notice him. And my mother alav ha-sholom, and there a few, and the older sister from me, Cesza, the one what is, thank God, alive.

So we went. Another few kids-- this was Golda was with us, too. And we went back to the city. Coming home, everything was destroyed. Thank you.

So you left your father. And--

We left our father.

--the rest of you went home.

And the rest of us went home. So approaching the city, we could see already from a distance that the house-- it wasn't just a house because there was a whole building. Everything was destroyed.

It was just like a skeleton. Just the bricks were stayed. In those few days, they didn't bomb the city when they marched into Zloczew. They were just burning house by house. And they were throwing in some chemicals--

Explosives.

--explosives. And that's how they destroyed most of the city, most of it. So we just stayed-- I don't know-- maybe for a few hours or even just overnight, someplace outskirts from our home. And then we got back to my father.

All this time, how did you manage--

Just in days, all the--

How did you manage for food or--

To be honest with you, the food was the least thing that we thought about it. Because leaving our home like we had, an open house for everybody, everybody could walk in, whoever needed something. And here all of a sudden in a few days, everything was destroyed, walking out just in the clothes what we had on. So it was just another day of Yom Kippur. That's all. Food really didn't mean much at that time.

So we went back to our father. And we were starting to get further because, like, 25 kilometers from there was Zdunska Wola. And this was a city where my mother grew up.

And I had two older sisters, two married sisters. And they lived there. My oldest sister, Rivka, and Luba, they both lived there. And they had their families there. So our goal was just to go there and to have a place to put our head down. And that's what we did.

And this was already occupied by the Germans?

Yes.

[INAUDIBLE]

Yes.

Zdunska Wola was, at that time, occupied also. But at least when we came in, thank God, to them nothing happened. And they were still in their places. Their place was not too big, you know, like how it was in Europe. You had a kitchen, a living room, and a bedroom for the whole family. The family could be four, five people.

And here we came in with father, mother. And we were six children because my brother was still in the army, in the Polish army. It was my brother and the two older sisters that lived in Zdunska Wola. There were already seven children, seven children and my parents. So all of a sudden, we had to look for shelter.

But at least we could be with them. And then we had to look how to try how to get by and how to start all over again. You see, I was still a child. To me, it was heartbreaking if I saw my parents suffering so much leaving everything.

And here, all of a sudden, you are left without anything and looking just for a place that's even a daughter or a uncle should give you a place to stay. So to them, it must have been terrible thing. But to me, being a child was still not too bad. I still had my parents with me.

And they were still taking care of us. Or they had much or not, you know how it's with the parents. The children are always the priority. Now, I can say it because now I know. But at that time, it must have been for them agony.

Sure. So how did you manage with your sister, living with your sister for a while? Or did that-- that didn't last very long, did it?

Oh, it's last quite a while because people were thrown already from the city. From the city, they were running from the city in Zdunska Wola. They were running here and out from the city. And you couldn't just take any place. You had to look for something.

So myself and my brother, the one what went to-- he left for Russia, and he never came back [INAUDIBLE]. And my younger sister, Golda, who went to Szadek, this was, again, maybe 12, 15 kilometers from Zdunska Wola. This was where my grandmother lived, where my father was born. Because my parents were trying to separate the family, to send them here and there that the burden shouldn't be so big on them to have all of them on their responsibility.

So I went with them to Szadek, to my grandmother. And we stayed there for a while, for a quite-- for a few months, we stayed there. But there was another uncle with an aunt with four children. And one more aunt lived in the same

apartment. But who were trying to manage, to behave, to be good.

You know, when they took us in, we were still grateful for it. And we were there for a few months till my parents found a place in Zdunska Wola. So the whole family could still-- could get together again.

Was this an apartment that they got?

It was really-- there were two rooms, an attic.

Oh.

And just to describe it could take hours. It was awful. Even going down the steps, you had to hold on with both arms not to fall down. But this is the best.

But at least you were together.

That's right. At least we were together. And this was the best that we had. And besides this, being from a religious family growing up very Orthodox, we believed all the time that parents, children, they should be together. They should stay together. They should pray together. And God will somehow look after us.

How long were you able to sustain yourself living in the attic?

Well, it wasn't exactly an attic. It was an attic apartment.

Attic apartment.

Apartment, we stayed there till 1942, till-- we stayed there till 1942. Yes, 1942, till we went to Lodz together, till they transferred us to the Lodz ghetto. Because the ghetto was closed in Zdunska Wola in 1940. So we stayed there until 1942. In--

So were you living in a ghetto condition in Zdunska Wola?

In Zdunska Wola? Yes. Yes, with the curfew--

Yeah.

--and with the gate. The ghetto was surrounded with gates. And people were going out to work.

What kind of work?

A lot of people were doing-- were working outside the ghetto. So the police brought them to the gate, to the main gate. And outside the gate, they were staying SS or from the Gestapo. And they were picking up those people and taking them to work.

And then the other people were working occupied in the ghetto. Most of the work was done for the Germans. But it was shipped out from the ghetto to the city.

Were they paying for this work? Was there any payment? No.

I don't recall it. Really, I don't. If it was, it was very, very little. Because we still had to buy food for our rations. So it must be that something very little was paid. Yes, in ghetto, we had ghetto money. Yes. After those years, somehow--

You don't remember naturally.

One comes back to you. And sometimes you just--

Did you yourself participate in any kind of work?

Yes. Yes. I was making socks for the German soldiers. We had little machines. And we were making sacks for them. And you had to make so much daily. And they were watching you.

Was it a factory type situation?

Yeah. Yes. This was a factory set up with machines. And everybody-- it was production. And everybody had to make so much. And it was very tough. We worked long hours from early in the morning till 5, 6 o'clock.

Anyone else in your family that was working?

All of my sisters had to work.

All your sisters.

Yes, everybody had to work. But most of the time, a lot of different work. But everything was mostly sent out from the ghetto. And it was going to Germany for the soldiers or to the fronts.

How was-- food rations, were they hard to get? How did you manage to get some food?

We had ration cards. And everything was rationed, bread, potatoes, little sugar, little oil, just to get by really. But still being together with my parents and with the rest of the family, somehow my mother, she managed so well.

And she still prepared food from next to nothing that many times it looks like the best. It was a chicken soup. And it was made from something that I really, when I think back, I really don't know what she put in it. And it was so delicious.

And it was good because we appreciate it because we were together even in a little place. But we're trying to keep it clean and neat. And everybody participated, you know, not to show to the parents, not to make harder on them after having everything and after having here all of a sudden--

From a beautiful life.

--from a beautiful life, beautiful family. Everybody respected you. You were somebody. And here all of a sudden, you were a nobody or nothing. But then, again, growing up in the country that the Jew was always pointed out, I can remember that we had a pogrom in our city. And at that time, I was maybe six years old, maybe six years old. And it was so-- such a tragedy.

What do you recall from that pogrom?

It was-- must have been [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]. This is Christmas Day. And they were going with the procession for the city. By going through a procession, I mean that from the churches--

A religious--

A religious procession. Because in our city, we had a cloister. That means monks were there, too. Yes. And so at the procession, they got dressed up. And they were carrying--

Banners.

Not just banners, they were carrying the Holy--

Crucifix.

--crucifix. And they were all marching and singing their Holy songs. And they blamed the Jews. They were trying to spill some poison liquid from the tap from the roof over the crucifix, over Jesus.

Oh, they blamed the Jews for doing that?

They blamed the Jews that they did it. But this wasn't true. Because I remember even from earlier years that whenever-- we knew that they were going through the city with the procession. So we knew already from our parents.

And when that hour comes, everybody has to be home. And we close the doors. Nobody went out because we were not supposed to be out even and look at it. Because being religious, Orthodox, you're really not supposed to look at those pictures and Holy things.

So this was so engraved in our mind that we shouldn't look at it and we shouldn't see it. So we're really home. And all of a sudden, we hear that they were breaking windows, breaking windows, and screaming, and knocking, and trying to get in into people's homes.

Did they succeed in breaking into some of the homes?

Yes, there were fights. They succeeded. But the police took care of them, you know? And it didn't last too long. But an incident like this you don't forget.

Yeah, pretty scary.

It was so scary that for days we were afraid not just to go out. We were going out. But when we came to school the following day, we were just like little lambs who were afraid to talk to our schoolmates that they shouldn't start all over with us, that they shouldn't hit us or that they shouldn't start out a fight with us.

So we're just minding our own business and not to get involved in anything. Because everybody from our Jewish friends, from the children, we knew that nobody did anything to them. It was just that they blamed you for something what never happened.

Getting back to the ghetto--

Zdunska Wola?

Yes. So conditions, as they were, you still managed?

Yes.

You still managed. And this was going on for quite a while?

Till 1942, I believe it was in August or so.

And what happened in 1942?

They were starting to take children. One day there was announced that they want to take just the children like from 7, 8 to 10. They want to send them to a camp.

And we should gather in one place. And they want take the kids and send them to a camp, that they don't have to live in a ghetto where everything is so rationed and they don't have the proper way, you know, facilities.

But somehow we knew there's more than this. They don't mean-- that the Germans, the Nazis, they don't care that our



younger sisters or brothers should grow up in a better environment. So we gathered, and they were picking out the children.

And one of them was my younger sister, Naomi. So they took a few hundred children, put them on trucks. And they took them away. It was terrible, heartbreaking. Now, I see how it must have been for my parents being a parent myself, how heartbreaking it was when they took the youngest away.

After a while, they said that all of us should go home. And the children will be taken care. They will take care of them, and we should leave. So we went home.

To describe how everything was coming to the apartment without my youngest sister was probably the worst scene that I could ever see, how my parents broke down. And you know, it's so terrible when you see parents crying.

But even this didn't last too long because my father said, thank God that we are back. And let's hope that God will take care of the children. Maybe they are going to a better place, and maybe the war won't take too long. And now, we will come back to us.

Maybe two hours went by. There was another announcement. And all the people should gather again. And we should meet on the cemetery. This was on the Jewish cemetery.

So we're all marching there getting there. Ah, God.

Do you want to stop for a minute?

Going through the gate, coming into the cemetery, were shoveled, pushed, one by one, one right, one left.

Who was doing the shoving?

The SS were staying in the gate. They were shoving. I was next, you know, to each other trying to hold on, my father and mother.

But when my father came close to the gate, he took-- he was wearing a black coat-- his black coat over his head and was holding onto my mother and threw over the head the coat, threw over his coat, over his head holding onto the mother and went on the left side. He was pushed on the left side, but he didn't want to look at the Nazis. He didn't want to look in their faces. So he covered his head with a coat. And that's how they went with the younger sister, Golda, with my younger sister, Ewa.

Approximately how old was she back then?

She was-- 12, 13.

Still a young child?

But she was more mature. She was taller than I was, more mature. And sometimes I wonder-- you know, I was much smaller-- how destiny throws you. So she went with my parents and the two youngest and her, [PERSONAL NAME] and Naomi-- oh, Naomi was already gone.

And then with them was my sister. There was my married sister was there, too, with two children. Her children, she was holding onto two children. So they grabbed them away from her. And they grabbed her out of the hand, threw them away. And she went to the left-- to the right side, my sister and my brother-in-law.

And my other sister, the younger sister, what was married also, she was with two children, two little boys, one on her arm, one next to her. And she was pregnant. They took them all right away away. The Germans threw them right away to the left. And this was the last I saw of them.

Did you have any of your sisters? Were any of your sisters going to the right with you?

Yes, this was my older sister, Cesza, Sylvia Feld. She lives now in Southfield, Michigan. And my older sister, the married one, she survived-- Zdunska Wola. And then we were all gathered on the cemetery overnight. Really we didn't know about each other.

You were separated at this point?

Yes. Because, you see, they were pushing right and left. And you couldn't hold on hands. In the middle of the night, somehow we found each other. But we knew that the rest our sisters went with my parents on the left side. But all night you could hear so much screaming and crying. To survive just that night was a miracle.

And in the morning, they kept us to the right side. Between the graves we were laying all night. You know, as a child, usually I was afraid to go to the cemetery. And here-- laying, spending all night on graves. It was terrible.

In the morning, they called out that all the people from the left side should get up and start walking out from the gates, from the cemetery, to get back to the field. And there were buses. They were not exactly buses. It was like trucks. And they were all pushed in into trucks.

We were still there when this happened. But I cannot see-- I cannot say that I saw my parents. I didn't see them anymore. Even though we were trying to get like last glance of somebody. But all the eyes were blurry or whatever from all night that I didn't have a chance to see them anymore.

Later, they were saying that those trucks there were with gas pipes.

Were they enclosed trucks?

Yes. Yes.

Enclosed?

Yes. The trucks were closed. Yeah. We couldn't see what was going on inside. But Polish people, they work there. And it took quite a few hours because we were still there on the cemetery till they loaded up all the people.

So these were all the people that went to the left that were put on these trucks?

Yes.

Yes. Were you aware of what they were doing to them, or you found out later?

We had a bit good-- we had a picture what they were doing. Because, you know, when we looked around on the right side, there were mostly young people. There were no children, no older people. And the younger children and older people were all on the left side. So it was--

It was clear.

--clear to us that it was that they are taking them away just for extermination. Because a few hours later when the Polish people were walking around the cemetery still cleaning up and we were still inside, they were talking that all the Jews what were taken away they went on the buses, on those trucks. And the trucks were with poison gas. And they put grout over them-- did you know-- that they shouldn't take too long.

And those trucks went Chlemno. This was a concentration camp that they didn't bother with-- they just made graves. They dug holes, big graves. And they just threw them in there. That's most of the people, just killed this way.

What happened to the people that remained in the cemetery?

We marched to the train. And they send us by train to Lodz, to ghetto. That whole trip should take mostly maybe 40, 45 minutes. But we were going back and forth for at least two days and a night without food, without anything to drink, nothing. Just they loaded us up like cattle, pushed us in those cattle cars, and locked the doors really tight, and left us there without food, without anything, without any place, you know, if had to go out, make whatever--

To relieved yourself.

Relieve yourself, everything was just you are on your own. Do whatever. It's like this is not our problem.

I just remember that we were going back and forth, back and forth. Some people were sitting calm, relaxed, like what can you do? Just can't do anything about it. Just wait what will happen again.

And screaming, crying, yelling-- because most of us we knew that we lost already everything and everybody. And God knows what's going to be next. Just the thought of it-- that you are going to a place, taking you someplace without your parents, without your loved ones, and God knows if you ever see anybody.

So after a few days going back and forth, they opened up the doors and let us out. A lot of them were dead already in the cars. But we didn't know about it. We were next to each other. We were just thinking that maybe next one is exhausted or tired just sleeping or resting. And then they were dead.

So we're starting to jump out of those cattle cars because they asked us to jump down. Whoever could jump, jumped. The other one fell and broke the legs or broke the head, so couldn't care less. Because the Germans were staying with whips, the SS. And they were just whipping, like make it fast. If not, get another one. There were a lot of dead people at that time, a lot of them.

So this was already going from Zdunska Wola to Lodz. And in Lodz, we were at-- it was [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]. It's a place, I think, that there must have probably had there barracks from soldiers.

So we stayed there for a few days in those barracks. And they were trying to-- the Lodz ghetto was already closed in. So they were trying to find places for us in different parts of the ghetto.

So we had a place, my sister, my older sister, the married sister with her husband. And there was my brother-in-law, the husband from the youngest sister what she was taken away with her two children. I mentioned earlier that she was pregnant with the children. But because she was holding onto the children, they took her. And he was next to her. And he was still a young man, so he was sent to Lodz, to ghetto.

So the three of them and the sisters, Sylvia, and myself, they gave us a room. This was already everything from Lodz. And Lodz and ghetto-- organized by Jewish people, by a committee. So we had our own together for a while. It was very small and very uncomfortable, but still happy and lucky and grateful that we still had a few of our relatives to be together.

And after a few months, my sister and I, we got another room some place else. We start to work and somehow manage to go on with life.

What type of work were you doing there?

I worked in a-- it was in the kitchen. We worked. We cooked for a factory. In the factory, they were making uniforms for the Germans, for the soldiers, for the Gestapo. All kind of uniforms they were making from the lowest to the highest ranks. Because sometime when I was passing by there, I could see, you know, that they were making-- the uniforms look different.

And I worked there in the kitchen to help doing the cooking for the people what worked in that factory. It was very hard work. For me being still so young, I had to work very hard.

So we had to wash out those cans from the milk. We didn't have milk, but, you know, it was from the soups. You had to scrub them out. Sometimes you had to scrub floors. And then we helped peel potatoes.

Everything was done by hand. And everything had to be spotless, clean. Because very often we had inspections, and everything had to be just done the right way.

And it was hard work, but it was-- I still had my sister. And the other married sister, whenever we had a chance, we went to see the older sister with the husband and the brother-in-law.

I would say that was the easiest life in Lodz ghetto. Because I remember when we first came to the ghetto and I knew that we had there relatives. My mother had a brother there. And he was sent out from Lodz from ghetto. Because they said that, if a husband or a son will go to a camp, if they send him to a camp, they will give better rations to the family, to the parents or to the wife and the children.

But I don't think so this was ever done. They send them away. And the relatives at home never even heard from them. They never got anything. They never were rewarded for anything. Because when we first came in, when we looked at that aunt and I opened up the door and I looked at her, I really got scared.

She was the most beautiful lady. And here, her eyes were swollen. The whole head was swollen. The legs were so swollen that she couldn't move. She couldn't walk. And looking at her, it was heartbreaking.

Of course, there was no medical help of any kind.

There were hospitals. There was a hospital, too. But you know, they had-- those cases, like for people being swollen or-- because this was they didn't have any food.

From malnutrition.

From malnutrition, for them, this was no hospital case. And this was no case for a doctor to come in or to give a cure for it. Because the only cure was, if they would have food, they would be cured. But if they weren't given any food, so it was no use to go to complain.

You couldn't go to complain to the Gestapo or to the Nazis, say, listen, I'm not getting enough food. Or my husband was sent away. He was promised that, if he goes to work, if he will leave us, if he leaves me with the children, then I'll be provided with-- I will have more benefits. But this never happened.

Working in a kitchen like this, did that help you somewhat with a little more food or--

Yes. It was easier because this way I could already help a little bit my sister, too. Because we were rationed with a piece of bread and a little sugar or a little flour, a little this and that. But when I was in the kitchen, you know, when it was cooking, you could already-- when we were done with the giving out the soups, there was always a little bit left around the rim from the big pots whoever cooked the soup. Or when the soup went in into those milk cans, this was sent out to the places, to the different--

Factories.

--to the factory, different stations. So when they brought it back, there was always a little rim that, when you cleaned it out, you could still even take it out with your hand and lick it. So I will say that it was much easier for me working there.

How long was this going on for you, working in the kitchen there?

This was till 1944, till we were sent to Auschwitz. But there was--

Was there selection going on all the time--

Yes.

--that you were aware of?

Yes. All the time were going on selections because there was a lady what was in charge, let's say, the principal or [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]. How you say [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]? She was--

Supervisor?

Supervisor, the supervisor, one day she came to me. And she said to me in a corner, Nadzia-- this is how they call me, my Polish name. She called me to the side. And she says, remember that for tonight you are on the list. They will come to pick you up tonight. And you are going to be sent out of the ghetto.

So really the Jewish police came, but they had orders to send out so and so many people. It isn't that they did on their own. It came in an order 500, 1,000 young girls in that age, men, whoever.

So she came to me. She told me. So I said to her, we have that one room. And I'm with my sister. I don't have any place to go.

She says that's why I came to you. You come to me for tonight, and you stay with me. And you will sleep over with me. And then in the morning when I come back to work, we will just say that you weren't well or whatever. We don't know where you are.

Because if they came for you during the night-- and they knew where you are working. So they came in the morning to the place to look for you. But she outsmarted them.

She said to me, you stay all day in my apartment. And in the morning when they show up, we just tell them we don't know where you are. And I stayed with her for two nights. That's how somehow I--

You avoided?

--was lucky not to go, not to be sent out. And this was already sending to concentration camp.

Yeah. Did you have some feeling or did you know what was going on--

Yes.

--where you were going?

No.

You already knew about Auschwitz?

We knew. Yes, we knew that they had working camps. We knew there is an Auschwitz. We knew that they are death camps. We knew about it, that most of the time they are taking people-- they start out with taking them to work. But after a while, they are just going to extermination. That's what we knew.

In Auschwitz, you knew that it was a death camp?

In Lodz ghetto, we knew that Auschwitz was a death camp. And while I was working there, one of the men, it was my husband.

Oh, he's your husband now?

He's my husband now. Yeah, we worked together. We worked together from 1942 till we went into Auschwitz together. Yes. We worked together. We were friends.

This was a Lvov?

No, this was in Lodz ghetto.

In Lodz, excuse me. Yeah, in Lodz.

Yes. He was, my husband, is born in Lodz, raised in Lodz. And he was with his mother in Lodz.

Was he working in the factory making the uniforms?

No, he was working in the kitchen, also--

In the kitchen also.

--helping with the cooking. He was not a cook, but he was helping. He was--

Scrubbing.

No, he was-- you know, the oven had to be heated.

Heated.

Heated, you know, every time you had to put in coal. It wasn't electric, you know?

Yeah.

So he had to put in coal and wood, start the fire--

Yeah.

--and watch it, that it should be on, that it should be the proper heat, that the food should be cooked on time. And later after it was cooked, he helped to clean up. And his mother was in Lodz, also, in ghetto. Lost his father in the beginning of the war-- he had dysentery. This is-- you didn't have any right medication, so he died in beginning of the war.

So you avoided the selection that one time.

Yes, yes.

And then were you able to go back to the kitchen--

Yes, yes.

--to help?

Yes. Then I went back, and everything was back to normal.

Your sisters, were they all right? They were still in the ghetto during this time?

Yes. My sister was with me. And the other sister with her husband and brother-in-law lived a few blocks away. But the conditions, the way we lived in the ghetto, we had a little room and not heated. And one day-- one night-- one morning, I remember I woke up, and I put my foot in a puddle of water. It was raining, and the water was coming in.

So it was just-- it was terrible really. But you couldn't complain to anybody. How could you complain in ghetto? You were still happy that you had a roof over your head even if it was leaking in-- not leaking. When it was raining, it was pouring.

Yeah.

So in 1944 is when they finally caught up with you with the selection?

Yes. In 1944, we were starting to liquidate the Lodz ghetto. And we're still trying to hide because they were coming. And this was already from the Jewish police. When they were trying to liquidate the ghetto, they were doing, like, streets by streets and sending people to the train. And all those transports were going to Auschwitz.

We knew about it. So we're trying to hold on for another day, for another day, hoping that maybe it will stop. Maybe someday they will say, oh, we have already so many people out. We have already so many people in Auschwitz. And maybe we don't need any more. We're hoping, but this never happened.

One day, we were already so pushed together from running from one corner to the next that from our place, that place where my-- I say my husband now-- friend stayed with his mother. It was you were still allowed to stay in that section.

So we moved there. My sister and I, we moved in into that apartment, in that same building. But every day, they were coming, the Nazis, the SS. And they were searching for people because they knew that people are hiding. They knew how many people there were in the ghetto. And they knew how many people are coming to the trains to go for Auschwitz.

So one day, I remember I was with my sister. And we had our place on the first floor. So we put all the bedding what was on the bed-- because we came into somebody's apartment. The people were already taken to Auschwitz. So there were, you know-- there was bedding on two beds.

We threw everything on the corner. And we stayed under. We went on the-- we laid-- we stayed in the corner. And we threw all the bedding over our heads. And we stayed, like--

Hiding?

--hiding in that corner. Then we heard that they were coming. The Nazis were coming up on the steps and with the whip. They were knocking on the bedding. And we were underneath.

Imagine, they see you, they shoot you on the spot. Because one thing was to go on your own. The other thing was if you were hiding. If you were hiding, you were already an outlaw, criminal.

Yeah.

So you were doing already something against them.

Right.

So they were knocking a few times. They said, oh, there aren't any [SPEAKING GERMAN] No [SPEAKING GERMAN]. And they walked away.

So the following day, we were afraid to do the same thing, that you are lucky once. You never know what will happen the next day. So we went up in the attic. And we were laying between the beams because they were walking up the steps.

We were staying just to look up what's going on. And we were between the beams. So they didn't see us. But it was so scary, terrible. You couldn't-- when you came down, you were exhausted and tired of everything. Like, what's the use?

So after a few days, we made up our mind. And we went to the station, to the train station. And with us came my mother, my mother-in-law, my husband's mother.

At that time, we were very good friends, being together already and going through all that tragedy and everything. So we went together to Auschwitz in the same car, in the same cattle car, taking with us whatever we could.

And was your sister and her husband and the brother-in-law?

No, no. From there, we didn't know anything anymore. Because there was no time to go from one place to another to look for each other. Because just going from one place to another, they cut you on the way.

So it was no use. You couldn't hold on. And it was no use to look for each other because we knew already that-- like, it's a shame to say it, but everybody was on their own. Help yourself, whatever.

We went together to Auschwitz, my sister, Zosia, and myself. Michael, who was my boyfriend, my friend, and his mother, all of us went together. And we happen to be in one cattle car. Because sometime even jumping up, they were pushing in.

[INAUDIBLE]

They were pushing in so many, but you still could have been separated. If they saw that you were holding on, so they pushed you aside that you should go to the other car not to be together.

Right.

The trip to Auschwitz seemed endless because we were going back and forth, back and forth on those tracks. They locked the doors and without food, without a drop of water and crying, screaming, calling each other. Because one still makes sure that your sister or your brother-in-law or your friend is still someplace around.

This took a few days and a few nights. I really cannot recall it anymore. I'm already so far that I don't remember anymore how many days we were going on.

There was sense of time anyway.

No, we didn't know the days. And you know, I spoke already to people. They told me that they were going two nights and two days. Some other people-- one night and one day. And some of them were three nights and four days. You see, they were doing like this.

It depends how fast the crematoriums were burning, how many people they could get in, and how many people were lucky could have been taken out still to work. So they were keeping-- in the meantime, instead to keep the people in Auschwitz in blocks and maybe feed them with a slice of bread, they kept them in the train.

So for them, it was much cheaper and less work. And they didn't have to watch us because the cattle cars were closed from the back. We couldn't escape. There was no way to get out. So they just let us in. And besides this, there were so many dead people. Because how long? Not everybody could stay so long. They were suffocating.

Finally, was the door opened at one time?



Finally, they opened up the door. This was probably the worst picture you could ever paint in your mind. Opening up the doors, you could see just chimneys. Because the way we were coming in to Auschwitz was a very big gate.

We went through the gate. And Mengele was staying with his whip, with his SS men, and with his all-- how you call it--

Watchdogs?

Watchdogs, no. [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH] or what?

Assistants.

Yeah-- just like all the time with the whip, just like this. And you couldn't hide. And you couldn't turn because you had to look at him. This is the way he wanted. Because this way, when he looked at you, he decided. Your life was in his hands. He decided or you should go right or you should go left.

And when you looked in front of you besides seeing him, you could just see chimneys with the smoke coming out. So you really-- we were in his-- in their hands. So I was pushed with my sister to the right.

And my husband's mother, my mother-in-law, at time my good friend's mother, was pushed to the left. Even she was maybe 50 years of age, beautiful woman. She was still-- she got dressed up in everything.

She was thinking, when she will come to the camp, to Auschwitz, maybe she will be dressed up and good looking, beautiful woman, very good looking, dressed even with makeup. She thought that maybe they will take her to work. She wasn't even 50 years of age. They pushed her right away to the left. And this was the end, didn't see her anymore.

And then just they ask you to march. You had no time to stay or think. You had to march. If they say so, you march. Otherwise, they were ready-- all the time they were with their rifles in their hands.

What about your boy friend, your boyfriend? He was separated [CROSS TALK]?

He was separate. You see, the woman went to one side. Right at the gate, the women went on one side and the men on the other side. So this was it. And you were so involved with yourself that you didn't even have any time to think. Everything was going so fast, and everything was so unbelievable.

So we're marching. And I was next to my sister. And they took us. We're marching, marching. And they took us went in first to a big room, a very big room. And they shaved our heads with a razor, not just cut the hair. We were shaved.

And then from there, we're send in the shower, in the shower. I didn't see my sister for a while. And I was screaming and crying, calling out Cesza, Cesza, calling out. And she did the same thing calling me. We stayed next to each other. We didn't recognize each other.

The eyes were right away-- you know, they look so wild. The hair is shaved off. We're staring at each other, looking at each other. Or you are, or am I your-- naked, chased us out on the field, naked, lined us up in fives. And we're saying that for the longest time, naked.

Few hours went by. They came with soup. And everybody in the first row had a pot, a little pot of soup. This was the portion for all five that were lined up. So everybody got a sip. And it was hot.

But you didn't care it's hot because you were so hungry, so exhausted, that you took a sip until you even burned yourself. Because the sip you took, this was almost your portion. So it went back maybe twice, you know, that pot, that little pot. And this was everything what they gave us to eat and drink.

We stayed there overnight. We could lay down. We didn't have to stay. And the following day, naked, naked on the

field, we could see barracks. We saw the barbed wires.

We saw everything, but we were just in the middle of a field. We saw the barbed wires. We saw the chimneys. We saw the smoke coming out. And we had no idea what they are going to do with us, following minute or the following hour, just staying there waiting.

The following day, it was already late in the afternoon. There came a German, and he picked out people, naked. We were all naked.

And they were walking all the time, men. The SS was going back and forth the whole time looking at us like you look at animals. And then there were so many Germans in civilian clothes, but they must have been also from their committees or whatever, just in civilian clothes.

They took us to a place nearby. There was a whole-- a big pile of clothes. So they throw at everybody something whoever could caught the underwear, or a slip, or a little blouse. Or when I was-- like I'm on the short side. So I caught something what was long. And the tall one caught something what was short. We got dressed. And they send us to Stutthof.

Directly right after you got your clothes, you were sent to Stutthof?

Yeah, it still took them a few hours until they counted out how many people they want. And they looked us over again just like you buy-- you look at cattle, which one is better, which one is worse, which one should go to be destroyed, or which one you could still use for something.

And they were still going back and forth, back and forth, to make decisions. How many? Once they came, they want more people. And then, again, they came. They want less. And then they added again a few. They were working. They were just trying not just to scare you, but to get out all your strength, everything what you--

Everything you have at that time.

So they sent us to Stutthof. This was another concentration death camp. How long it took from-- this was we were going by buses-- in

Trucks?

Buses, I mean trucks. We were going in closed trucks with SS and very heavy guarded, very heavy guarded. They kept us there like precious cargo. Yeah. Oh, God.

Sometime we wondered how we're really precious after losing everything and everybody. We didn't mean to each other much, but somehow it was our destiny. We're thinking maybe to suffer more or maybe to survive and to be able to tell what was going on.

So all the time being watched so closely, it was already like-- not just like you watch a prisoner. Whenever you turned, you thought, oh, there is a whip, or there is a gun in your back, a rifle in your back. They didn't go with guns. They were going with rifles.

Coming to Stutthof and being already a little dressed, it was already late in the fall, 1944. Stutthof is near Danzig--

The sea, isn't it?

Yeah, Danzig. This is near the Baltic Sea. And it was pretty cold there. They-- by they, I mean, the Germans, the SS. They pushed us into barracks. In the barracks, there were no bunk beds. We were all on the floor.

And there were a lot of us. Because if the barrack was, let's say-- if you can lay down-- let's say, for 100 people, they put

in 500 to pile us up not even like sardines. Because sardines they put in layers. With us, they just piled us up.

In the morning, they called us out for an appell. And then afterwards we were getting a ration, a piece of bread, a slice of bread. And in the afternoon, they gave us soup, one ladle of soup.

And we stayed there a few days. We were in and out. Then they came from unemployment, from German unemployment, for people to work. So they picked us out to go to work for [GERMAN].

Which means?

That means-- it was labor work. Yes, but it was out from camp. They took us out from concentration camp out into bunkers. And we worked there in bunkers. In bunkers, they had farmers were bringing in vegetables.

Wheat? Vegetables?

No, no, potatoes, vegetables, potatoes, beets, carrots. And this we had to make--

Digging holes?

Yes. And then we had to make portions because they must have been a lot of camps there. Because we didn't see anybody. We were on one side, and men were on the other side. But besides this, there must have been more camps spread out through Stutthof. Because we were making those portions to send out on wagons, the vegetables, for different places.

And we worked very hard. They were watching us like dogs. And I remember the shoes we had. I had those Holland shoes, those--

Wooden.

--wooden shoes and walk on them. We had to walk miles to work. And there you had to walk around working and then going back. And on those wooden shoes, it was really agony to walk around. And you had to walk fast. Because in a half an hour, you had to make a few miles back and forth to the camp.

But this was still not the worst thing. Because I was still with my sister. We worked together. We slept together. We cried together. We were together.

And my older sister, she was in another barrack also in Stutthof. One day, we heard about it. And we went to see her. So whenever we had a little bit more from our portions-- because when we worked there, we would have a carrot or a beet eat raw, you know, or a piece of potato.

So when we had an extra piece, we saved up a piece of bread and took it to my sister. And we were trying to see her as often as we could. She was just two blocks away from us. In the evening when we came back from work, we could still see her. But there was a curfew. But we were managing.

One thing I didn't mention. With us in Lodz, in ghetto, worked a young lady. She was maybe three, four years older than I was. She was born in Lodz, beautiful, intelligent. And she was working in the office in ghetto in that kitchen where I worked.

And when she came to Stutthof, I saw her one day. She was terrible depressed. She used to say to me, Nadzia, for what? For what all that going through? It's no use.

Look at this, those barbed wires. Look at the chimneys. We won't get out of here anyway. And she wasn't taken to work. They didn't take everybody. You had to be lucky. And she stayed in.

And she said, they didn't even take me to work. I used to say to her, if not today, maybe tomorrow. Don't give up. Maybe still a miracle will happen. You start going to work, and your spirit will get better.

One day, we came home from work. She ran against the barbed wires with her both arms. This is how we saw her.

This happened in Lodz?

This happened in Stutthof.

In Stutthof.

This happened in Stutthof, but she worked with us in Lodz, in ghetto, in the kitchen-- lovely person, lovely person. See, even young people couldn't take it. It was too much.

So coming back now, we went to work going and coming. One day, we came back from work and went over to see my sister. She wasn't there. She complained to us that she's very tired and her vision has given up on her. But she didn't say anything to-- from the--

The supervisor?

From supervisor, she didn't mention anything. Because the minute you mentioned something, you were taken out right away to the crematorium. And everybody was so hoping and thinking maybe it won't take too long. Maybe a miracle will happen over night.

And she was out. Her clothes was already there. Yeah. And so that's that she stayed with them that she was taken-- she was pulled out to the crematorium.

We didn't stay much longer there. We stayed there for another few nights, another few days. You know, it was so terrible. When we laid down to sleep-- I'm talking about Stutthof on the floor in the barrack. You know, we were piled up.

But after the appell, everybody was trying to run in first to get a corner or to get the wall, that they shouldn't walk around on you. Because in the night, if you had to--

Go.

--go, get up, all the windows were open. So you were just walking on somebody's-- on their head, or on their shoulder, or on their stomach. You were just-- and you couldn't leave your wooden shoes. Because I could never find my place back.

First of all, it was dark in the night. And in the meantime, somebody else moved over already. And somebody else would have taken them. So even if I had to get out, I had to have my shoes or hold on to them.

Or you were so sleepy that you didn't think. And you were still walking in your shoes. In the meantime, somebody bit you. If you walk on somebody's neck, well, they don't care. They just hit you or bite you.

After a few days, we had an appell in the morning. And a man from unemployment office came, a German, and pulled out 50 women. Because, you see, in another barrack, there was a whole group, women and children.

In Stutthof, there was a whole group of people that were from Lodz ghetto. There was a metal factory, Himowicz. And he had somehow connections with Rumkowski. Rumkowski was the chief in Lodz ghetto.

So there was some agreement with them that they will send the whole group to Dresden, to Germany. So in the meantime, they kept the whole group. The women and the children they kept on in one barrack. And the men and the

younger boys they kept on the men's side together.

So when it was time to send the group to Stutthof-- I'm sorry, to Dresden, they needed a few more. They need--

They were [CROSS TALK]?

--younger people, like, for work, a little stronger people. So when we were staying-- it was the appell. And that German man from unemployment was picking out people.

My sister was pulled out from the line. And I was pulled out. But this was a miracle. This I can say in my whole honesty that just my parents were watching over us. Because this was the last group in the last transport that was going out from Stutthof to a working place. Because all the other people were destroyed. They were all pushed, you know.

Because the war was already coming to an end in Poland, not-- this was already by the end of December of 1944.

'45?

No, '44. And they were trying already to liquidate Stutthof. So they were pushing all the people in the Baltic Sea. They didn't waste any ammunition for them. They just pushed them. Or if not, they asked them to jump in. And who could swim? And who had-- no one could. You didn't have the strength to do it.

So most of the people were destroyed. And really this was pure miracle. And I just believe that our parents, being so good and being so devoted to the community and doing so many good things for other people, that somehow they still had the power to watch over us. And we were taken out from Stutthof and sent to Dresden, to Germany.

There it was already-- they gave us clothes. And we worked in the factory. It was an ammunition factory. And we stayed there. We had already worked in same place.

And Biebow, he was one from the Gestapo that was in Lodz ghetto. He was with us in Dresden in that factory. He was going back and forth to Lodz because he was bringing clothes from there. He was bringing pots and pans and, you know, what was left in the ghetto. And we could still use it because there were a few hundred people of us in the factory.

And with him being together all the years with Himowicz, so there were, like you say, in kolkhoz, that he shouldn't be sent out. Biebow shouldn't be sent out to the front. So he was trying to keep himself busy going and coming. And it was an ammunition factory. So somehow--

So did he provide you with a few more things than you would [INAUDIBLE]?

Yes, yes. We had already more to eat. We had already a breakfast. A breakfast-- they gave us a piece of bread with--

Coffee.

--coffee. And then for lunch we had a soup. In the evening, we had a piece of bread with coffee again. And women's were on one side of the factory, and the men were on the other side of the factory. This was already upstairs. And every morning we're going down to work.

Did you also have appell there?

Yes. Yes-- every morning counted us. And when we came down from lunch, they made sure, again, that we are all there. And in the evening, they made sure that everybody is in their own corner, not to run around, not to go on the other side to where the men were. Because there were couples. Like I said, there were the couples from what were from Lodz, from ghetto.

And were there even some children there at that time?

Yes, yes.

Yeah.

And there were some children, too. But there were just 50 of us that we were supposed to be really the workers. And we worked really hard. You put in a lot of hours. We had to produce a lot. Because there were older people and there were younger people. And we had to cover for them.

Yeah.

Yeah.

And can you describe what kind of ammunition you were making or--

You see, we were making different parts--

So different parts--

--different parts. And the different parts were sending out to different places. So we didn't assemble anything. But then came, again, the bombing of Dresden. And this was another nightmare.

Because we were trained, they told us, that whenever we hear a siren that we should run down to the bunkers. But the first night, it happened so fast that we hardly had any time even to get up and start running. And a lot of them were killed just on the way going down to the bunker because the bomb fell right away in the factory. The minute you hear the siren, bombs were falling.

Did you manage to get into the bunker [CROSS TALK]?

Yes. Yes. Yes. We managed to get to the bunker, and we stayed there till it was over. But the whole factory was destroyed.

Destroyed.

The whole factory was destroyed. And we couldn't go up anymore. And the whole sky was lit up. It looked just like daylight. Because there were German flyers and there were--

I'm sorry.

The Russian or the British?

The Russian and British-- and English, there were so many that the whole sky was lit up just looked like daytime. After it stopped, we had no place to go back. So we ran out on the street. And we thought that we are free people. But free people? You are free?

Where to go?

Where to go? While we were running, it was everything on fire. So I had a sheet on. The sheet was on fire. So somebody in back was just trying to throw something else over you just to get it out. And you were running, but there was no place to go. And there were still a few hundred of us just running like you let out wild animals from the zoo.

Were there were also some Germans running for their lives? You know, the guards, the-- you can't recall?

No, I can't recall because I was just-- we were too busy with our--

Panicked.

Panic and scared-- everything is on fire. You don't know where to go. The trees, everything is on fire. The factories, everything was burning. You don't know where to go. You don't know where to run. You were scared that you are running into the fire.

So somehow it stopped. It stopped the bombing, and it stopped the fire. And in the morning, we were trying to walk around. And we wind up on the same place where we got out. Because where the factory was, there was a big-- I will not say-- it was a field there around with not a house but--

A farm or something? A farm?

Yeah, something. So in the middle of the day, the SS women and SS men, they were starting to look around for us. And they were screaming out, you better come here and here because we find you anyway. There is no way for you to run because we know you and we find you. And if you try to escape, we'll kill you.

So we get it there on that place. And we're waiting. So late in the afternoon, they brought-- when we came back on our own, it was OK.

But a few people what they brought back, they shaved their heads again. And this was already after having your hair for a few months. You start to look already a little bit like a human being.

They shaved their heads. They pushed them around a big tree and took a rope. With a rope, they tied them up. And they were starting to beat him with whips.

You could see the blood coming out of their skin. And they said, you see? When you run away, this what will happen to you.

So we were there for a few days out in the field. And we were watched. They watched us days and nights.

And then they took us on a march. They said they are taking us over the border to Czechoslovakia. Because in the beginning, they tried that maybe they can still find a place for us to work someplace in another factory.

That's why they kept us there for a few days because they thought that maybe they will still get us in to work. But most of the places were destroyed, and they decided that we should go on a long march, walking. And we marched. We walked.

So a lot from the Gestapo and the SS, there were less and less from them. Because mostly they had German shepherds that were going with us. They were watching us.

That's when we came to-- took us days and nights. In the night, we just stopped some place in the field. And they get at us, so we shouldn't be spread out too much.

Excuse me, was this in the winter time?

Yes.

Yes.

Yes.

Because at the end of the war, and--

Yes. This was already in the beginning of 1945. They give us little to eat, next to nothing. When we're walking through the fields, mostly we were trying to get out from the fields.

We were digging it out with our fingers potatoes because the farmers put in potatoes to let them-- because to grow potatoes, you have to put in pieces of potatoes. So we're trying to get out those pieces of potatoes. And this was our nourishment.

Is this a long time that you were on this march?

Yes, we're walking for days and nights. And now coming closer to Czechoslovakia, they had a barrack there. And we stayed in that barrack for a few days because they wanted to take us to Theresienstadt to the crematorium. Because Theresienstadt was no concentration camp. It was just a crematorium.

But they still had to wait for their OKs that-- because the crematorium could take care of just of so many people daily, nightly. So they kept us there in the barracks. And daytime, we went out.

And there were days that they were bringing us little pieces of bread. Everybody got like a slice, maybe like one slice of bread, and black coffee. But that coffee was ex--

But we didn't have any water to wash. So I remember one day I took the coffee. And I took off my undershirt. I'll never forget this. And I was trying just to sprinkle that my underwear. And we were in the backyard.

I kept it on my shoulders to dry it just to have the feeling that at least it was wet and you shouldn't wear it for weeks the same thing. How we weren't sick, you know, with--

Typhoid.

--typhoid diseases? But we were trying to keep clean. I don't know how and with what. It was just a plain miracle from the flies or whatever we weren't poisoned.

On the way to Theresienstadt, this was already probably February. Like I said, mostly we were going. So the SS was watching us, going with whips. And if you sit down for a minute, they whipped you.

But there were a lot of German shepherds marching with us. So when you had to sit down and do, the dog waited just for you a minute or so and then you went on. So we were lucky. They wait for you to go.

So my sister and we had another girlfriend, she is still in-- she's in Israel. We planned that we will get closer to the forest because we were approaching the forest. We will try to go in one by one and sit down there on the ground. And maybe the group will go on and somehow--

You'll remain there.

--we will remain there, or we will try to get away. Because groups were going-- the whole time you could see there was a group before you and in back of you. The transports were going all the time.

Your camp was not the only one? There was--

No.

--a total evacuation.

Evacuation, they were all trying to send them out from Germany to Czechoslovakia to Theresienstadt. Because they didn't use any transportation anymore, no trucks, no trains, nothing. Everybody was already on their own on foot.



So we stayed there. And then we saw each other, and we remained in the woods. And the group, the transport, was going on, went further.

It was almost getting dark. An elderly German soldier, he was patrolling the woods. I would say that he was already in his late 70s.

And when I saw him, it was already too late to hide. He was already next to me, you know, in the woods with the trees. So he was already next to me. And I got frightened, terribly frightened. I thought, oh, that's it.

And I kneeled down, and I kissed his hands. And I said to him in German, please, we don't have any more strength to walk. Let us stay here, please.

So he said, remember, I didn't see you, and you didn't see me. And he made sure. You remember. If not, you know what happen to you. I didn't see you, and you didn't see me.

And I grabbed his hand. And he was gentle enough to leave us. And we stayed on, and he went. He left.

So we stayed there overnight without food, without anything to drink. And we were on a hill. And underneath, we could look down. We saw there was a farmhouse. So there were coming out pigs, eating in the--

In their--

There was a retainer or whatever you call it. So in the late-- when it was already dark, one of us-- I don't remember which one-- ran down the hill and grabbed a handful. And we shared this. It was something with potatoes with some oat--

[INAUDIBLE]

--or whatever. I don't know. It tasted--

Wonderful.

It was cake for us. It was sent a special-- got a special treat. The night went by, and we stayed on there in the woods. In the meantime, the night time, it was snowing. And it was bitter cold. But we had no complaints as long we felt that we are on our own. And we see what we'll do from then on.

In the fields was a stack of hay stack up very high. So we ran down the hill very early in the morning. This was already the following night. We stayed there in the woods for two nights. And this was already the second--

The third.

--the third morning.

The third night.

The third morning, we went down there at dawn. And we went into hiding in--

Hay?

--that haystack. And we stayed there. In the middle of the day, we heard workers were coming to work on the fields. And we heard speaking Polish. So we thought, oh, if somebody already speaks Polish, not just German, it means that they are some war or--

Civilians?

--or civilians. But what they were taking-- how you call it-- veterans or whatever from the war. Maybe they were taking prisoners of war, and they were taking to the farmers for work. That's how we were thinking. It was the only thing that we could think of that the Polish people would work there. They must have been--

True, because this was Czechoslovakia.

This was Czechoslovakia. But this was Czechoslovakia, but there were Germans there, German farmers.

Yeah. And you heard Polish?

And we heard Polish. So one of us-- I cannot say which one should get the credit because I really cannot remember. We called over one. And we told them the story, that we are here, the three of us. And we told them the whole story.

So it was a man. He was very nice, very, very polite. And he said, stay right here. Don't go out. I will try to bring you food. Even the food was a piece of bread or baked-- not cooked potatoes, you know, and the peels like they cook for the--

For the pigs.

--pigs. But for us it was a treat. So he came later. He brought us food. And he said, stay here. Don't get out because the Germans are still all over. And the transports to Theresienstadt are still on the go. And you are still in great danger. Just stay and wait, and I will try to do whatever I can.

And he told another few of his friends what's going on, that here are two Polish-- there are three Polish Jewish girls from Poland. And they were bringing us food. And we stayed on.

But after a few days, it was getting already-- you see, dogs were barking. When the farmers were coming to work in the fields, usually they had dogs with them. And the dogs could smell us out. So--

Tape.

I will put another tape.

Yeah.