https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

Well, you won't be able-- that's light-- and the light is on.

Good morning, Mrs. Lebovitz.

Good morning.

I will start with you-- talk about the Holocaust, about what you went through, your children, your whole family. First, I would like you to ask you your name, your maiden name, when you were born, and your father's name, and your mother's, and so on.

OK, I was born in a small town. It's called Sasau. It was called Sasau. I was born in 1908, April 8. And my name was then Shari Klein. My maiden name was Shari Klein. After I got married, I moved to Kralovo nad Tisou, and my name changed to Shari Weisberger.

Was this in--

This was my married name.

Which country?

In Czechoslovakia.

Oh, Czechoslovakia.

Yeah. Although, I was born in Hungary, and after the First World War it changed to Czechoslovakia. And we were, for 20 years, under the Czechoslovakian government, which was very nice. It was just like the United States. We were free to practice our religion. We were free-- free, like here in the United States. We called it "Little America."

And after I got married, I moved to, like I said, to Kralovo nad Tisou. That's a Czech name, Kralovo nad Tisou. And you wanted to know my parents' name.

Yes.

My mother's name was Gitel Goldenberg. My father's name was Isidor Klein. And I had three sisters and two brothers.

What were their names?

My older sister was Sarah. The second one was Pearl, and one was Blanche. And my two brothers, one was David-- David, the older one, and the younger one was Adolf. And they were all Kleins, you know. Sarah, came to the United States when I was five years old, with my father.

My father was, through the First World War, in the United States. And we couldn't even get a letter from him. We weren't in touch with him for about seven years. And my mother raised us. And my mother had a little business where she traded-- she traded groceries for grain, for eggs, you know, bartered like.

No money-- it was a little village, and the Goyim didn't have any money, just grain, wheat, corn, eggs, chickens. And we bartered for that. And that's how my mother raised us through the war, through the First World War.

When the war was over, my father wrote a letter to my mother that she should get ready and come to the United States. She didn't want to come. She said she's not going to a country where she won't be able to keep her Jewishness. She was very religious. So my father picked himself up, and came home, and left Sarah here in the United States.

First, he married her off. He married her of, and he came home with $4,000, which was a lot of money at that time. But

This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word generated with 3Play Media.
It is not the primary source, and it may contain errors in spelling or accuracy.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection
he didn't change the money right away. He was hesitating. He wanted more money. And the value went down of the dollars, and he exchanged it. And he bought 10 acres of land. And he worked that land.

And then he died-- let me see, he died of tuberculosis. And I don't remember the time.

Before World War II, he died?

Yeah. He died of tuberculosis. And also, my youngest brother, drowned in the Tisza River just before they took us to the concentration camps.

Wait a minute, before you go about the concentration camp, let's start about the-- when the war broke out, what happened when the Germans came in?

Yeah, well, in 1939, everything changed. We lived very nicely up till 1939. In 1939, Hitler had the Hungarians come back to our part of the country. And the Hungarians were terrible. They were even worse than the Germans.

In 1939, they took away the license from the Jewish people. They closed up stores. I had a little grocery store in a butcher shop. My first husband was a butcher.

This was right when the war started.

Yeah.

But how about the Hungarian people or Czechoslovakians, how were they before the war? Were they friendly?

Well, before the First World War, when we were Hungary, we were all--

I mean before Second-- World War II. Before Germany invaded your country, how was the living--

Yeah, we were friendly.

Friendly.

Friendly, yeah.

But they changed when--

After--

As soon as they--

The Hitler--

--occupied

Yeah.

--by Germany, they changed.

They changed for the worse. They didn't want to know us, and they weren't friendly anymore. And then, so they took away my little business and took away the butcher shop. But they took away my husband first.

The Germans, when they came in.

This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word generated with 3Play Media.
It is not the primary source, and it may contain errors in spelling or accuracy.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

Yeah, the Hungarians, and, you know, Hitler's-- through Hitler, you know. Let me see.

They took your husband away, right away.

They took my-- they took my husband away. They started taking away about 19-- 1936, every year, for 10 months, into labor camps. His name was Solomon Weisberger.

In 1936.

Yeah.

The war started in 1939.

It didn't start in-- well, Hitler was already working in 1933 now towards this. But the war started-- wait a minute. I'm wrong. They took him away about three years before they took us away, and that was in '44-- in '40-- in '40 already, after 1939.

They took him every year for 10 months into labor camps. After 10 months, he came home, ragged, like an old man, very tired. And he rested up a little bit, and they took him again for 10 months, for $0.20 a day to work, before the-- before the-- I don't know how you call it-- before the front.

Oh, before the front.

Digging ditches and things like that.

Yeah, labor.

Labor, yeah.

Hard labor.

Yeah. That was--

When they took your husband away for hard labor, you already had a family, don't you?

Well, sure, I had--

How many children did you have?

I had three girls.

Three girls. what were their names?

Their name was Lillian, Magda. Magda was the first. Magda and then Pearl, and Lillian.

They took your husband away. He worked in the camp behind the front. How did you support that family?

Well, I had-- for a while, I had the store and the butcher shop. And I worked the best I can with it. But when they took away already the store from me and the butcher shop, I was doing black marketing, with soap, first with soap. I used to go over to Romania. The border was open that time. It was a mish-mash.

And I used to go over to Romania, and pack a big suitcase with soap, and bring it home, and sell it to my customers, who were my customers in our store. And that's how I supported my children. And I had a little money. When I closed up the store, I sold everything out. So I had a little money from that. But that didn't last long, so I had to start black

This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word generated with 3Play Media.
It is not the primary source, and it may contain errors in spelling or accuracy.

marketing.

And then later on, I found out with the black marketing, somebody told to the police about it. And they arrested me once. They came to my house, and they ransacked the house, found the money, found soap. They took me to the police station. That was already Hungarian police-- gendarmes they called them, with feathers in their hats, and bayonets they were wearing, and big, big feathers in their hat. I don't know if you ever saw a Hungarian.

They took me there, and they were beating me up, calling me all kinds of names-- you dirty Jew, you-- all kinds. And they beat me up. Where did I buy the soap? And I didn't want to tell them where I bought it. I told them I bought it on the open market. I bought it from a Jewish man really, who I knew.

So finally, about two hours of torturing me there, they let me go home. When I went home, we were all crying. My mother-in-law took care of the children while I was away. So I couldn't do that anymore.

And then I found out that I can buy cotton and silk in a bigger town in Romania, in SzatmÃ¡r, it's called-- SzatmÃ¡r. I would dress up very elegantly, and take a nice suitcase, and go and buy 30, 40 yards of material, and bring it home. And a woman from another town used to come and buy it from me.

Once I had a terrible mishap. When I was coming home with a suitcase, and it was very heavy. I was going on the train, and a gendarme was right behind me. And he took the suitcase and helped me up. I never looked Jewish. I was blonde, and I was dressed very nice. He couldn't know that I'm Jewish, you know.

So he helped me up to the train, and sat right next to me. And you know how I felt. So we come back, and we talk. He says, oh, that suitcase is very heavy. That was soap yet. I forgot about it. That was soap, and it was heavy. I says, yes, I visited my mother, and she packed-- she always packs up a suitcase full of cakes and things for the kids to bring home.

And he believed me, probably, because he didn't do nothing. And I had a nice conversation with him. And he left the train about two stations before I had to leave. And he shook my hand and kissed my hand. And I went home, [NON-ENGLISH].

Was he a German gendarme or--

No, a Hungarian. And we talked Hungarian all the way. He was sitting next to me and had a conversation. But my heart was going like this, you know. But I got home. And that woman came once or twice. And the third time, somebody did me in again.

Although, I told her-- I told this woman how she should take the material-- the next time, I didn't take it in a suitcase, the third time. I wound it-- wound it around-- it was winter, and I wound it around on my body, 30 or 40 yards of material, and put on the coat. And I told her to do the same thing, but they caught her in her-- in her town, when she got off the train. And she told them right away where she bought it and how much she paid for it. And she even told them where I put the money in my house.

Was she Jewish too?

No, she was a Hungarian woman. So naturally, the next day, I was arrested again. And I had-- I was sick. I had a gallbladder attack. I was in bed. They schlepped me out of bed. And they took away all the material they found. They took away the money. Schlepped me into the station again. And there was-- one of the-- I don't know how to call them-- the gendarmes had one officer who was above them.

A high officer.

A high officer-- that high officer used to shop in my store. And I used to give it to him on charge from month to month. And when they took me, and he was there, and he wouldn't help me. And they beat me up. I came home with black eye and beaten up again. He would not help me, although he still owed me money. So that wasn't good. It was--

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

How long did they keep you there?

For hours. For hours.

And then let you go.

And they let me go, yeah. I never wanted to say where I bought it. I always said on the open market. I didn't want to get the other guy in trouble, you know. But after two, three hours of--

Torture.

Yeah, torturing me, they let me home. And that was going on like that until 1944, when they took us away.

Now in Hungary, where you were at, when the Germans came in, did you have to wear Jewish star?

Oh, yes. We started wearing the star before 1939. My husband used to come home from the labor camp, and when he was returning always-- the third time, he didn't want us to come because we were wearing the yellow star. And that was very demeaning to him and to us.

And when it all started, you still went traveling and selling that stuff, the silk or soap, with the star or you took it off?

No, no, no, no, I had to stop doing that. After the second time they tortured me, I couldn't do it anymore.

But I mean you-- when you were selling stuff, did you wear the star while you were traveling, the Jewish star?

No.

No.

No.

Didn't they punish you for not wearing it?

Well, I was not wearing the star till later. I don't know. I don't know exactly what year we started wearing those. But in 1939, that was the end of everything. From '99 to '43 probably, I was doing the black marketing.

Now when you stopped with the black marketing, how did you support the children?

Well, I had a little money, and my mother-in-law helped me. And I didn't have to pay rent anymore because I lived in my brother-in-law's place. I didn't have to pay the rent, and I managed.

Now how about the food situation? Did you have to stay in the line to get food? Or you can go buy in the market?

Yeah, we were able to get food.

There was no rationing of the food?

No, not--

Till you went out from that city, there was no rationing?

No. Well, it wasn't-- it wasn't in abundance, everything, but you can-- you were able to get it, yeah. So it was going on. In 1944, they took us away, in 1944, April, right-- a day after Pesach. First, I didn't think they will take me. I'm a poor

This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word generated with 3Play Media.
It is not the primary source, and it may contain errors in spelling or accuracy.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection
woman with children. I thought only the rich Jews they are taking. That's what we were seeing.

But in 1944, April 16, we heard the drummer, drumming-- how was it called-- a town crier-- the news. You know, he beats the drum and goes on the street. And I hear the town crier, the drum. And I opened the window to listen to him, what he has to say.

And he says, no Jew is allowed to go out of the house today. They all have to be in the house. So I thought to myself, what is this? It was terrible. It was a terrible scare. We can't go out of our house?

Then I go out to my gate. I wanted to see more about what's going on. And two soldiers with bayonets standing at my gate, and they wouldn't let me out. So I saw this big trouble.

Then I always looked through the window, what's going on. Then I see a family, The Schreibers, who were living about three houses away from me, the whole family goes with two gendarmes behind them, going with packages in their hands, with very sad faces. I says, my God, they are taking him away. Where are they taking them? I didn't know nothing.

So I thought maybe just the rich Jews they are going to take. But no, when the afternoon came, they came to me. First, they picked up the rich ones, that's for sure. And they took them all to the temple, which was in the middle of town.

And they took me too. They came to the door and said, we give you 10 minutes, take whatever food you can, and two changes of clothes, and come. That was the day after Pesach. There was no bread in the house. There was just matzos.

Did they ever tell you where they are going to take you?

No. No.

No.

Just 10 minutes, get ready. Not even-- I was running like a chicken without a head. I picked up some matzos, and I picked up some jam that I had in the house, and that's it. And took my baby in my arm, and we went. In one hand, a suitcase, and in one hand, the baby-- march. And they pushed, you know.

You had the other children with you too?

Sure, Magda and-- yeah. Well, this was a baby, only two years old. So it was hard walking all the way to the temple. It was kind of far. We got there, and they put us in the temple. The temple was already full, with Jewish people sitting on the floors and all over. They brought all the Jews in. There were 700 families in Kralovo nad Tisou.

So don't ask what a night we had there. That was horrible. Children crying, old people moaning, sick people sitting on that floor. And they locked the doors on the temple. And outside were guards with bayonets-- you know, gendarmes, all night long.

Finally, when the morning came, they opened the door, and said, 10 people at a time can line up and go out to the outhouse. We didn't have toilets there-- outhouses, you know-- yeah. You know how it was in--

Yeah, I know.

So 10 people, or 10 persons at a time they let out to the outhouse. And that's how it was. Children hungry-- everybody's hungry. No food, no nothing. No water, nothing.

Then a Catholic priest-- [NON-ENGLISH], but how you say that in English?

He will mercy for you.

This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word generated with 3Play Media.
It is not the primary source, and it may contain errors in spelling or accuracy.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

Yeah, had mercy on us. And he preached in the church that they should bring in some food for the Jewish people. So some neighbors started bringing in something. I had a gypsy woman who used to work for me. She was doing my laundry and cleaning. She brought in-- she brought in bread and hard boiled eggs so the children had something to eat.

And by the afternoon, they loaded us up on wagons, horse and oxen wagons. And they take us. We don't know where. It was terrible.

The wagons were full with people and children, and children cried. And they were shooting to stop the crying. And the Goyim looked through, through the curtains, through the windows--

You mean the Gentiles.

--to see this caravan.

The Gentiles were looking.

Yeah, the Gentiles were looking. And it was like a gypsy caravan, these wagons. We go, and they took us to a city, which was about 10 miles away. It was called Nagyszolos, or in Czechoslovakian, Vel'ka Sevljus. And there, too, they put us first in a temple. And they had already about 10,000 people from the surrounding area in there.

And the next day, there was a ghetto, surrounded-- I don't know how many miles of streets and houses they surrounded with a big fence. And they put us in those ghettos. And no food-- well, there were houses, some empty houses, that we could have a little water or something to drink, but no food.

Then, a couple of days later, they started bringing in-- from our town, from our houses, they collected food, grain. I don't know, like corn, and wheat, and potatoes, whatever they found, they brought it into the ghetto and started giving it to the people. It was chaos. It was terrible. It wasn't enough.

And we were able to cook it. Like if I had a little corn, I cooked it in water, and we ate it like, you know-- like it was. Or a potato, or even wheat, we cooked in water and ate it. That was going on for five weeks. We had no way of cleaning ourselves. We had-- we had no soap, no way of cleaning ourselves. And we were full of lice, with so many people together.

So after five or six weeks in that ghetto, we were already weak. We were already emaciated.

Dehydrated.

Dehydrated, everything. So then they took us to the train. From there, we had to march, I don't know, a couple miles, to the train. And they loaded us in into cattle train, 80 people-- 80 or 90 people into one cabin. Also, we were sitting on the floor, on the bare floor.

They locked up the trains on us. No water, no food, traveling like that. And, you know, my children-- the two-year-old one, in that train, she never-- she never opened her mouth to cry. That child felt already that something is very wrong-- a two-year-old one and a seven-year-old one.

They never asked for anything. They were sitting quietly in my lap. And the grandmother slept, the other one-- nothing. There was no way to relieve yourself. Some people took off their shoes, and urinated in the shoe, and threw it out through the little window on top.

They had a little window, yeah.

Yeah.

This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word generated with 3Play Media.
It is not the primary source, and it may contain errors in spelling or accuracy.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

Did you have any idea where you're going?

No. No. We were said in the beginning that we are going to a work camp. That's what we were hoping for. But when we saw what they do to us in that train, and I didn't think so anymore.

How long you were traveling in the train?

Two days and two nights.

And no--

And--

No facilities or anything.

Nothing, nothing. And there were sick people in there, crying. They were-- people were stepping on each other. It was no room where to move. And a couple of times the train stopped, and we would go to that little window, which was high up, and cry for water. They would shoot in the air to scare us, and they didn't give us any water. So the second or the third day, I think, we stopped in Auschwitz.

When you stopped, did you know right away that's Auschwitz?

No.

No.

No. We stopped--

What happened when the train stopped? What happened?

What happened when it stopped, they opened the doors-- heraus, heraus-- you know, the Germans-- heraus. So what can you think that time? We were in trouble. It was already visible that we are not going to a work camp.

So we got heraus, and a Polish prisoner, a Jewish man, in striped clothes, who were ordered to select. Well, the Germans were standing there, and this man selected-- to the left, to the right.

When he came to me, my mother-in-law and my sister-in-law were standing behind me. My mother-in-law was 73 years old. And he asks who she is. I said, she is my mother-in-law, in Yiddish. So that's how I knew that he was Jewish. And he says-- he didn't say nothing. He took the baby out of my hand and gave it to her. He took the seven-year-old, the one who was holding on to my coat, and gave it to her.

Then he comes and asks how old Magda is. Magda was the oldest.

How old was she then?

She was 16 years old-- 16. I said she's 16. He says, don't say she's 16. Say she's 18. And he left her with me. They loaded up my mother-in-law and the children on a military truck-- not only her, all of them. They filled up I don't know how many military trucks.

And the ones who put to the left-- we were-- Magda and I were to the left. When they all left, they put us in lines, like five in a line, and we started marching. We marched, and we come to a place where we saw a lot of barracks, and high fences, and people with-- women with shaven heads, looked like idiots.

And they were starting to give us a piece of bread, if you have-- they started asking. I don't remember, I think in German

This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word generated with 3Play Media.
It is not the primary source, and it may contain errors in spelling or accuracy.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection
or in Yiddish. So we saw already. And we saw-- then we saw the gate-- arbeit macht frei, and it says Auschwitz. So that's when we found out.

And they put us in barracks. Those barracks were for horses made-- made for the horses.

Before they put into the barracks, didn't they took you to take a shower?

Yeah. First-- that's right. I told you, I forget things.

That's all right. That's all right.

Yeah--

When you marched in, they took you in--

First, when we got-- when we marched into Auschwitz, they took us to a place where they first shaved us, and then took us the shower. And that shaving was terribly demeaning. For women to get undressed in front of men.

The men were the ones who shaved.

Yeah. That was the most terrible thing, I'll tell you. I'll never forget that. We were shaved by a man, all over, you know. And then they put us into a shower. We had to leave the clothes there, right where they shaved us. We had to throw down the clothes on the floor and leave it there. Then we went to the showers.

After the shower, then they gave us a panty, and some shirt, and a dress. Like an assembly line was there. And one gave us a shirt, and one gives us a panty, and one gives us a dress. But not--

They didn't care if it fits or doesn't fit you.

No.

Take it.

Take it. So I had a long dress down to the floor. Magda had a shorter dress. You know what? We didn't recognize each other after afterwards. We looked terrible with those shaved heads. You really have to look and recognize your own children.

And that wasn't enough yet. They gave us clothes that we looked terrible in them. By the door, when we're leaving the door, there was standing a man with a bucket of red paint. Took a brush and-- and our backs, all of the way down, like this, painted our backs.

Why did he do this? What's the reason?

What the reason? We should be recognized if we run away.

Oh, I see.

For recognition-- you know, for recognizing us-- a red stripe over the back. And that was cold. It was terrible.

It was in what year?

1944.

Was it in the-- in what month?

This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word generated with 3Play Media.
It is not the primary source, and it may contain errors in spelling or accuracy.

In May.

In May.

May 1944, yeah. And then they took us into barrack C. 10 C or something like that.

How many of you were in a barrack?

Thousands or more.

Was there bunk beds or just--

Bunk beds.

Bunk beds.

Bunk beds, from the floor to the ceiling. And they put in in each bunk, about 10, 12 women. And we were like herring, pushed together-- like sardines, pushed together, no blanket, no nothing. And also, they closed-- they closed in the barrack. We couldn't go out for days.

And to go out to a toilet or anything-- no, they had two big pots in a corner-- in both corners of the building, and there you have to go. And that was smelling. We were there, and that was smelling terrible. But we had to go every morning at 5:00 for appell.

Appell, that's meaning they count--

Counting.

--how many people.

Yeah, yeah.

That nobody's missing.

Yeah, every morning, and they would give us black coffee, and a piece of bread, like a brick, hard. And go back in the barracks and stay in bed for a couple of days like that. Then we were-- then we were allowed to go-- they--

When they gave you the coffee and the bread, that's the only food you got during the day, or did they give you--

No, at night, we got a bowl of so-called soup, a vegetable soup, with a potato in it and with a lot of sand.

Yes.

Yeah. Did you have that soup?

I had that too.

Yeah.

Was it in Birkenau? Auschwitz-Birkenau?

Yeah, but we weren't in Birkenau. We were in the-- on the Auschwitz side. Birkenau was a little aside from there. But there was a lot of people in Birkenau. That was even worse, I heard.

So for five weeks-- we stayed only five weeks in Auschwitz, thank God.

Did they assign you any kind of work?

Yeah. Like I said, after a few days, they assigned us to go to work. And we had to get in line, five in a line, and march. They took us out of the ghetto and taking us to a forest, where there were underground factories. It was so camouflaged that you couldn't see that that was a factory.

And they-- I was working inside a factory, where they were loading ammunition in bags. Those bags were silky, like outside it looked like silk. And inside, it was rubberized.

And Magda was working outside with another girl, taking 50 bags of ammunition from that factory to another factory, all winter long, just in one striped dress, no stockings on their feet, just wooden shoes.

She worked all winter long outside. And I was working inside. I was at least warm. That was going on for a long time. And the food was miserable.

Oh, the best thing-- I forgot. In Auschwitz, soon-- or was this not in-- no, it wasn't in Auschwitz, where they selected me for a cook. It was not in Auschwitz. It was in Stutthof.

We will get to it.

Yeah.

Yeah. So I was working inside the factory, and she was working outside. And sometimes one of those Germans, who were watching us, put a piece of bread in their wagon, for those two girls, once in a while. And the food was terrible. And there was some Russian girls too working, not Jewish.

And so I was working in those factories. And I stole bags. I stole a bag. Went into the bathroom, and I wounded under my dress onto my body and brought it to the barrack. And at night, by candlelight, I would make that bag wet, peel off the rubber. And that was a nylon. And I was able to, from that material, pick thread--

Thread, yeah.

--thread out of it. And I went to the kitchen, where they were cooking for all the people in the kitchen. And I said, if you can get me a needle in a scissor, I'll make you a brassiere. I'll make you anything for a little food. So those women had contact with outside people, who brought in the food from the-- the city or from wherever.

So yes, they got a needle, and they got a scissor for me, but not a thimble. So I used to sew at night by candlelight, make for the girls a brassiere. For the other cook-- you know, for the cooks, and take it to them. And they gave me potatoes, cooked potatoes, a piece of bread. And that's how Magda and I survived.

And then after five weeks, they took us from there someplace. We didn't know where. They took 1,000 women, five in a row. They made a group of 1,000 to take away for work, but they didn't tell us where or what. And the thousands were standing and waiting, what's going to happen.

You and Magda were in the 1,000 women.

No. No, Magda-- Magda-- they picked Magda and put her on the side to the weak ones to send back. This was all ready-- to send to the gas chambers. And I thought to myself, if I lose her-- I lost two. If I lose her, I don't want to live myself anyway. And I ran, and grabbed her by the hand, and pulled her in.

Then they came, and they saw there is an extra girl. They took out one from the back, instead of Magda. This happened

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection
twice.

I had the same experience.

Yeah? So, thank God I did it, and they didn't shoot me. I thought they're going to shoot me, but maybe they didn't see or God wanted it that way. I don't know. It happened.

So then they took us again to a train, the 1,000 women. Loaded us into trains. And we go two nights and a day or two days. I don't remember exactly how much time we spent. And then they say, up steigen-- und steigen-- again.

To get out.

To get out. And so we got out. And they lined us up again, five in a row-- [GERMAN]. We go, we go. We march, and on both sides, the SS men watching nobody should run away. And we see we are coming up to a forest. And it's called Stuthoffer Wald.

That'd be forest.

A forest, yes.

Wald is forest.

Stuthoffer Wald-- forest, yeah. So they took us through the forest. And we got to lager 15, it was called. Barracks, again, but different-- better types, bunk beds. But only 22 women in a room. So we thought we are in [NON-ENGLISH].

Like in heaven.

Yeah, like in heaven. Well, I'm using some Jewish words. That's all right. They'll know--

That's all right.

They'll know what it is. So 22 women, and then, again, we had to shower, to clean us up. And they gave us nice blankets for the beds, for the bunks. And it was a little bit better. The food-- the food almost the same.

Now on the bunk beds, did they have any mattresses, or straw, or something?

Straw.

Straw.

Straw. And over the straw, a blanket. And then we had to-- we had one blanket to cover ourselves. And we were working there again. In fact--

How was the food over there in this camp?

Well, when we got off the train, they gave us-- they gave us some bread and slices of salami, which we didn't see that for-- never seen before. But in the barracks, that was like that-- in the morning, coffee and bread. And sometimes that Limburger cheese, that I-- I was hungry, but I couldn't eat it. Could you eat that Limburger cheese?

No.

No, see? That was-- the food was the same. We were always hungry, but I-- over there I was selected to the SS kitchen with another woman. The officer who selected us asked us if we-- he knew we were Hungarians because the Hungarians came to the last. We were almost in the last transport. So he knew that Hungarians make a good goulash.

This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word generated with 3Play Media.
It is not the primary source, and it may contain errors in spelling or accuracy.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

So he took us to that kitchen, we should cook for 40 officers, myself and another woman. And they gave us pork. And they gave us everything that we needed. And we made a goulash for them. And they licked their chops. They liked what we cooked.

But also, we had a big Kassler or [NON-ENGLISH]-- I don't know how they call it-- to cook for hundred people in the revier, for the sick people. And I cooked that too. And that one, they gave a little bit more meat to put in, cut up in tiny little pieces, about-- maybe in that big whole thing, five pounds of beef, and potatoes, so that was a little bit better.

And what I did-- yeah, and we were not supposed to eat from that food that we cooked for them. We were supposed to go and eat in the Haftlinge kitchen.

Did they watch you while you were cooking?

No, not always.

Yeah, then you always can eat something.

We did it. We did-- we did steal and eat. Not only that, but from that big amount that I cooked for 100 people in the hospital-- the hospital-- a revier, they called it.

They called it a revier.

Yeah. I would steal-- fill up two pails of food and hide it in the pantry. And when it dark-- when it got dark a little bit, I smuggled those two pails of food in my barrack and feeding the 22 women who were living in my barrack, gave everybody a little bit, you know. That was such a risk. If they catch me, they shoot me right away. But I did it.

And not only that, I even stole from-- pudding from the other one and took it in the back for Magda, and two sisters, who were Magda's age, who were from our part of the country, but not from the same town. And I took pity on those kids. Because they were very young, and they didn't have anybody. So I took care of those two also, as much as I could.

But sadly enough, that lasted only five weeks that I was in that kitchen. Because I stole some onions and gave out to these people who came to the door, you know. And once we were cleaning cabbage to cook in that kitchen, and the OberfÃ¼hrer came in, and I was chewing cabbage. He gave me two big punches on both sides of my--

He slapped your face.

Slapped my face on both sides and kicked me out of the kitchen. And from then on, I was never able to get anything in that camp. Sometimes they got in some underwear they were giving out. Sometimes some shoes came in. I was never able to get anything. I was punished all the way because of that.

And that wasn't enough punishment that he threw me out from there. He put me on a bunker with two pails of water in my arms. And it was winter-- windy, cold. I was standing there all day long, high on that bunker. I thought I'll die there. Then a Jewish-- he had a Jewish secretary working for him in the office. And she took pity on me. And she begged them to let me down from that bunker.

Magda and other children came home from their work, and Magda saw me standing there. She started crying, but she couldn't do nothing for me. So finally, at night they let me down from that bunker. I couldn't walk when I came down from there. My arms were-- something terrible.

And so then I worked again in a factory after that. Yeah, he also had me clean latrines.

As a punishment.

This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word generated with 3Play Media.
It is not the primary source, and it may contain errors in spelling or accuracy.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection
For the punishment, yeah. So you can imagine how I felt. It was terrible. So then I worked again in a factory. And I-- I continued.

Keep talking.

I continued doing-- is it OK? I continued stealing again bags and making brassieres for the cooks. And I always-- after they threw me out of the kitchen, I had to do something to get a little food. And I continued that. Thank God they never caught me with that.

And I made them not only brassieres, but a holder for the stocking-- stockings-- garters, they call it. I made them garters. I made brassieres. And I always got a little bit of potatoes or a piece of bread. And that's how I supported myself and the three girls, the three young girls.

That was terrible. People were stealing from each other. And even a father from his son stole, I heard, or mothers from daughters. I always gave Magda more than for myself, always. If I had three bites, I gave her two, and I left me one. That's how I was with Magda.

Did they have selections at that camp too?

Oh, yeah, every day, they--

A gas chamber there? No, they didn't have a gas chamber in this camp.

What?

A gas chamber, did they have a gas chamber in this camp?

In-- no.

No.

From there, they had to send them back to Auschwitz. In Auschwitz-- while five weeks in Auschwitz, we smelled the gas chambers day and night. The flesh burning, we smelled it day and night.

But in the other camp, who did they select? The people who were unable to work?

Yeah, every day, we have to stay appell in the morning and at night. And they always selected out the weak ones and send them back to Auschwitz.

Send them back.

Yeah, yeah. That was going on for a long time. Then, let me see, by January, the Russians were coming closer and closer. And we-- we used to hear from the cooks, who they had a little contact with the people who were bringing in food, and they used to tell them something, that the Russians are not far, and they're going to-- they're going to get free, you know.

I can't tell you everything in detail. It was a very long story. I have it all written down. But I can't even remember what I wrote down. My memory is not as good as it used to be. So in 1985, January--

You mean 1945.

1945, excuse me-- in 1945, when the Russians were closing in, one morning they say, get ready to go. Take your blankets, and line-- and line up by the gate, and we're going to march. That's what we did. And the food-- towards the end, the food was less, and less, and less all the time. No food, no nothing, we started marching. And it was snow up to

This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word generated with 3Play Media.
It is not the primary source, and it may contain errors in spelling or accuracy.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection
here. And with the wooden shoes, we marched in the snow.

And we see people running. The Germans are running. Wagons, loaded with everything-- people are running away. We saw something is going on. And we were marching and marching all day long. And towards the evening, the Germans who were watching us, who made us march, started leaving us too.

And I says to Magda and to the other girls, the bunch of girls, I says, I'm not-- I'm not marching any further. Now, wait a minute-- no. Yes, we marched all the way, till night, and they locked us in, into a big barn for the night. I says, children, this is it. They are going to burn us down in this-- in this barn. It was a big barn with straw in it.

It was horrible. I don't know how many thousands of us. It was from all-- from all the other barracks too, not from the only one that we were. And all night long we stepped on each other, with people crying. Oh, you're urinating on me. Oh, you know-- things like that. And when we cry, and we make noise, they were shooting outside to quieten us down.

I said, they will never open this gate for us again. They will burn us down here. But they didn't. In the morning, they opened the gate, and we walked out. And we marched again. It was the second night that I said to Magda, when they were starting to leave us, the second day, after marching a whole day-- and it was chaos. People were running away from the city-- from cities, from villages, from all over-- running, running.

Because the war was coming closer. The front was coming closer. From one side, the Germans are shooting. From another side, the Russians, you know. So it was walking all day long in the snow, I saw a little house, far away on a field, with light in it. I says, Magda, I am not going-- we are not going any further. We are going down to that house.

The snow was high, and it was on a field. It was on a farm. We walked through the snow, in ditches, and we walked to that house. We came to that house, about-- let me see, about eight of us. And an old woman opens the door. And she lets us in. And we come in, and Germans are sitting by her table. But they didn't do nothing to us anymore. They were running, themselves, and they came to warm up or something there.

And we stayed in that-- the woman-- I says to the woman, we'll give you some blankets if you give us some bread or tea. And she agreed. She gave us tea, hot tea and bread, and we gave her a blanket. And she let us stay there. We were sleeping on the floor by her. That was a woman-- a widow with three daughters.

The next day, the shooting was so close, it was terrible. The house was shaking already. So the woman picked herself up, with her three daughters, and she asked us to go with her to the forest and hide-- to hide, because the front was coming so close. Machine guns, grenades, everything was firing, you know.

And so I says, we are not going no place. We were freezing all winter long. It's warm in this house. Please, let us stay here. She says, OK, if you want to stay. If you're not afraid, stay. And she said here are potatoes, here are cabbage. Cook for yourself and eat. And they went away.

And sure enough, a couple of days later, the Russians came in. But it wasn't easy. They burned down her barn. And several of our girls burned in there, who was hiding there. They burned in there-- the cattle. And the house, with us, remained staying, in tact. It shook, but I says, I'm not afraid. I'm going to stay in this house.

And when this was all over, the woman came back with her three daughters. She hugged us and kissed us. She says in our honor, her house was saved, because we were in there. And it was really a miracle that they didn't burn down the house too.

The Russians burned down the houses?

No, no-- the Germans--

The Germans, before they leave.

This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word generated with 3Play Media.
It is not the primary source, and it may contain errors in spelling or accuracy.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

Yeah, before they were leaving they burned down. And, oh, then we found out how many girls got killed from grenades and from shooting. A lot from our group of girls got killed in that fire, when the Russians and the Germans come through over there, yeah. That was horrible.

I don't know what else to tell you. I skipped--

Now what happened-- when you were you in that house, did the Russians came in that city, in that place?

Yeah, the Russians came in.

What happened when the Russians came in?

When the Russians came in, we went out, and we were shaking white-- they freed us. And they gave us some bread. And then we decided to march into the city, to Bromberg-- Bydgoszcz. And as we were marching back to Bydgoszcz-- it was about 30 kilometers from there, where we were, from that farm, still dead people, dead soldiers laying all over, and civilians too.

And we went, and we pulled off shoes from dead soldiers, and put them on. Because we had only wooden shoes. Oh, I can't talk about it. It's-- yeah, we pulled-- we pulled their shoes off, and put on the shoes, and went into the-- went into Bromberg, into the city.

The city was more than half destroyed. It was chaos all over. And a lot of our people were milling around in the city, looking for things, for food. And the Russians told us to go and occupy the German-- the German's homes, which were empty. They ran away from them.

So we got into a nice German home, where a German officer was living there. And the maid was still there, a German woman. She didn't want to let us, but the Russians made her let us go in there. And that was already heaven in there. There was-- we were able to cook for ourselves. We found food. We found a pantry full of jam, and potatoes, and-- and we were cooking.

And one day, she offered us that she's going to bring us some goulash, the woman. And she did, but we were afraid to eat it, that maybe she put in poison. So we didn't eat it. Because she was very mean. She wanted us out of there. We did not eat it. But then we also went looking around in town.

Some women-- some of our women found a lot of gold in houses and all kinds of clothes they picked. I, too, found a beautiful chain, which I'm still wearing today. This is not it. I have a nice gold chain that I found in a drawer. And we took some shirts, the officer's shirts. I took off curtains from the windows and packed it in our backpack so that we can-- when we leave, we can buy some food for that.

And about seven other girls were coming with us. So I packed myself up with everything. And we wanted to go-- we wanted to go to KrakÃ³w. And there was no trains, no nothing. Everything was in ruins. So we walked from village to village. And sometimes went into to the mayor and asked for information, or you know.

So finally, we got to a place where there would be a coal train which was taking in coals to KrakÃ³w. So we went on that coal-- no, no, no, this was later on. No, we hired a man in one village to take us through a forest. After that forest, we would get to a place where we get some kind of a freight train. And I gave him I don't know how many shirts.

And he took-- he says, it's very dangerous to go through this forest. It's full of mines. But he says, I know where the mines are. And we trusted him. We wanted to go desperately. We wanted to go home. So he took us through that forest. That was a long, long walk, till we got out of that forest. Thank God we wasn't-- we weren't killed by a mine.

And from there, we somehow got to KrakÃ³w, on a coal train. On the top of the coal, we were sitting, and we got to KrakÃ³w. And there, already-- there was already a lot of other people who got freed, Holocaust people. And they had a kitchen there already. And we got some food and got some information, how and what, where to go.

This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word generated with 3Play Media.
It is not the primary source, and it may contain errors in spelling or accuracy.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

But a room they didn't have. We were sleeping there, too, on the floors. And we got, again, full of lice there, in that big building. And from there, also, somehow by freight trains, we got to Czechoslovakia. We got to-- not Prague. I don't remember what city we got into. And there, also, they gave us some information, and they gave us some food.

And then we got home. We come home, we didn't have no home. My home was-- windows and doors were taken off, no furniture, no nothing. It's night when we got there. It was March already when we got to Kralovo nad Tisou-- midnight, snow. Where shall we go?

My mother-in-law used to have a hotel right by the train station. This was a big train station. Trains were coming from all over through our town-- through our town, from Romania, from Hungary, from all over. It was a big train station. And she had a hotel there by the train station. I know there is nobody in there.

We went to the door there and knocked the door. Nobody answers. So we start crying, where shall we go? I walked to my house, which was just a block away-- no doors, no windows, empty. And there was a little house about a block away, where a Russian woman was living. She had a Jewish husband. And they were taking him too to the concentration camp. And she was still living in that little house and the lights were on.

So we went to Mrs. Fixler's-- house. And I opened the door. I knocked in the door, and she opens the door. And Russian soldiers are sitting in her-- in her house, around the table. And she says, who are you? She didn't recognize us. We were very good friends.

I says, I'm Mrs. Weisberger, and this is my daughter, Magda. Then she comes and gives me a big hug and kisses me. And oh, my God, she said, come on in. Please, come on in. She took us in. She made us right away hot tea, and she gave us bread, and we ate. And she said, you're going to sleep here. I says, yeah, we are going to sleep here on the floor. No, she says, you're going to sleep in my beds.

I says, Mrs. Fixler, we are full of lice. We don't want to contaminate your bed. She says, no you're going to-- Mrs. Weisberger, you're going to sleep in my bed with Magda. And she says, Joe Kraus is here and two other young men who returned from the concentration camp. And Joe Kraus is a nephew of mine.

I says, where is he? She says, he lives in your mother-in-law's hotel. I says, we were there. We knocked in the door and nobody answered. She says, he was afraid to answer, because the Russian soldiers, when they get drunk, it's hard to-- so he was afraid to answer the door.

Early in the morning, Mrs. Fixler went up. We were still asleep, and she went over there to announce that his aunt and his cousin, Magda, is here, and some other girls. He came running. He didn't know what to do. He was there already a month or so, he returned. And he already established himself as a tailor. He had a machine. He was sewing already.

And he took us over there. And over there, we had to boil our clothes to get rid of the lice. Well, finally, we got rid of everything. We got cleaned, and we were eating good. He was always-- for the sewing, he got a little money, and he got meat. So, it was OK.

When we rested up, he had a friend with him. Tibor Weiss was his name. Joseph Kraus and Tibor Weiss, the two of them were living together in that place. And the Russians were returning from the war on that-- like I said, we had a very big train station there. Trains and trains all day long, Russians returning. And come down, and look for food, and hungry. There is nothing to be gotten.

We opened up a restaurant, myself, and Joe Kraus, and Tibor, in their own building. They had a building just across from my mother-in-law's hotel, a big building, where it used to be a restaurant. We opened the restaurant. One of the boys always went in villages to get food, to get meat, to get wine, whatever he could. And the Russians would come in to us. And I was cooking a big pot of potato soup, or whatever there was, a bean soup.

And for a plate of beans soup or potato soup, they would give us dollars. They would give us gold. They would give us

This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word generated with 3Play Media.
It is not the primary source, and it may contain errors in spelling or accuracy.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection
material, fabric. We got so much money, but we couldn't stay too long in there.

The boys used to bring from the villages wine, getting from the people who were making it, and they would get drunk. And they would want to rape the girls, my daughter, and Magda, you know. So we saw it's no good. We'll have to discontinue this.

We were probably in this business for about three months. And we assumed so much. But we weren't happy with it. We didn't want the money. We didn't need the jewelry. We just wanted to go to a place where we can live in more comfort.

A normal life.

A new life, yeah.

Now, before you go farther, what happened to your husband?

My husband never returned from-- the last time they took him, he never returned home. From the labor camp, they put him in the concentration camp. I never saw him, never heard from him-- never. We didn't know what happened to him. Now, after we got home, and Joe Kraus, and Tibor, and other young men were already in town, one of them said that he was in a hospital in Wels, Austria.

Herrsching.

Huh?

Herrsching-- the hospital, it was in Herrsching.

In Herrsching, no-- Wels.

Yeah, Wels-- Herrsching.

Yeah.

I was in this hospital.

You were in that hospital? How did I found that out? This young man said he was there in the hospital, my husband, with typhoid fever, and he died. I says, do you know where he's buried? He says, no. A lot of people died there, and they put them on a military truck and took them out of town to bury. He says he didn't know where.

So when I found-- I was still waiting-- we were hoping and waiting that he'll return. And when I heard that, that was terrible.

In other words, he survived the war--

He survived--

--but he died in there after the war.

Yeah, died in that hospital. And he also said-- he says, he was sitting one day outside the hospital by the wall, sitting. And he says, I haven't got where to whom to return. My wife had a small baby, had small children, she didn't survive. My mother didn't survive, because she was 73.

He says, I haven't got nobody to go home to. He lost faith, and he died. If he would have had just so much knowledge that someone is alive from his family, maybe he would have survived. But he lost-- he lost hope.

This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word generated with 3Play Media.
It is not the primary source, and it may contain errors in spelling or accuracy.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection
So we know already that he's buried someplace there. But five years ago, I went to Austria, and I went to Germany, which I shouldn't have gone, but I went with a group of people.

And when I was in Vienna, when we came back to Vienna, I asked the guard, who was coming with the bus with us-- he was German-- I says, would you do me a favor? Give a give a call to Wels, to a hospital. I don't know what the name of the hospital is. And find out if they know about Solomon Weisberger.

He called up, and they said, yes, they have a record of him, but we will have to wait two hours to go down in the archives and dig up the records, so we should call back in about two hours. Two hours later, they found his records, and they gave us the grave number, the cemetery, everything written down for me.

Was he buried there in Wels?

No, the cemetery was called-- it was close to the-- to the airport, a cemetery, which these Holocaust people were buried.

You don't know the city, the name of it?

No, but I have it all written down. So whatever he said, I says, type it down for me, so I have it in type, so I can read it. And the grave number, 4-- well, everything was written down. But I didn't ask if it's a single grave or a mass grave. I didn't ask for that.

So I didn't know. A year later, we were going to go back to Austria and visit the grave, but before we go, we want to find out if it's a single grave or it's a mass grave. So we wrote to Wels, and we never got an answer. Then my son-in-law got in touch with Senator McCain, And. He told him this story. And he asked him to find for us out if that's a single grave or a mass grave.

So he did find out that it's a mass grave. A lot of people are buried in it. But we're going. we are going in May. We're going anyway. We want to see that grave. Yeah, and we didn't go because-- we didn't go that year because a lot of terrorism was going on. So we were afraid to go anywhere.

And now we were-- you were talking about when-- about you had the restaurant, and then you start to leave because it was bad.

Yeah.

What did you do? Where did you go?

Wait a minute. Yeah, we were continuing-- we had an awful lot of money collected-- dollars, German money, Russian money, all kinds of things-- fabrics, gold. But it didn't interest me. I wasn't happy with it. And they weren't happy with it.

And one of the boys, Tibi Weiss, he was very ambitious. He says, I'm going to go down to Solotvyno, and I'm going to buy a trainload of salt. And I'm going to ship it down to Hungary and make a lot of money, and then I'll follow you. We left him.

I sent Magda and Olga, her cousin, who lives now in New York-- Magda and Olga went to Budapest-- through Budapest to Czechoslovakia. I send them in advance. I had plenty of money to give them-- go-- go away from here. Because it was dangerous.

One night, they surrounded our building, the Russians, and started shooting. They were drunk, started shooting, and we never reopened that place. In fact-- I forget a lot of things, I'll tell you. This Joe Kraus, who is a nephew of mine-- he lives in Chicago-- when they started shooting, he went out the back door, and he wanted to go to the railroad station for the police, for protection.

This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word generated with 3Play Media.
It is not the primary source, and it may contain errors in spelling or accuracy.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

And he was going-- he was not going the regular-- the regular way. He was going through backyards and, you know. And he fell into-- into an outhouse, which was into the--

Yeah.

Gosh, he came back full of it. And he had on a new suit he just made. He's a tailor. He made himself a new suit from the fabrics the Russians gave us, and he fell into that-- into that hole. So all night long-- we went to a-- a [NON-ENGLISH]-- to say it in English. I don't know.

Where the water is, [INAUDIBLE] water.

They put pails of water on him to wash him off-- finally, to wash him off clean. And then he dried off that suit and took it to the cleaners later on. But I don't think he was ever able to wear it. It shrunk or something. And so Magda and Olga went away to Budapest, to Czechoslovakia. And she was waiting for me and Joe Kraus to come.

In the meantime, they closed the borders. From here to Hungary, we had to go through a border. To Czechoslovakia, we had to go through a border. This was under the Russians. And Czechoslovakia was Czechoslovakia.

So I had a very good friend, who was a train conductor, who was going through Czechoslovakia, taking a trainload of coal. We gave him 10,000 crowns, he should put me-- he should take me and Joe Kraus through the border.

He did that. He hid us. I can't-- I can't remember the words. In the engine, there is a place where he was able to put us and make very high steam, they shouldn't see us. Until we go through the border, he was hiding us there. And that was terrible too. We were steamed up, you know.

But when we got through the border-- at the border he had to stop, and they were examining the train, what he was taking. And they didn't see us, thank God. Took us through the border. And then he says, now-- he stopped, he says now you can come out. And that's how we got to Czechoslovakia.

That's how you got you reunited with him Magda.

With Magda, and Olga, and my second husband-- who became my second husband. He was there already too.

You mean you married--

I married--

--after the war.

I married after the war, but not there.

Oh, not there.

I met the man there who was going to be my husband. That's the way I should have put it.

OK.

He wanted to marry me right there and then. I says, no, I'm going to the United States. And he was going too. He had a brother and sister in Chicago. And I had a sister in Chicago and one in Philadelphia. And the one in Philadelphia sent us all the papers. And that's a nice story too, how I got in touch with her, because everything was destroyed.

One night, I couldn't sleep, and I remembered her address. And I wrote a letter, that we are alive, we are here, and we are going to Czechoslovakia. And even the mail was disturbed. It was chaos all over.

This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word generated with 3Play Media.
It is not the primary source, and it may contain errors in spelling or accuracy.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection
So there was a soldier, a Jewish young man, who was in the English League or something. And he took my letter to Czechoslovakia. And from there, he mailed it to America. And when they got that letter, they right away took action to get visas and everything else, to take us out from there.

And so in Czechoslovakia, we were all right. That was rationing there, though. We had everything on rations. But for a while, we-- we weren't free there either. It was chaos. And they stopped us, asking who we were, and, you know, it was-- but in 1946, we left Czechoslovakia by train to France. And in France, we got on an airplane, TWA, to America.

What year was this?

1946-- June.

In June '46. What happened when you came to America? How did you adjust to America? What did you do?

We came to Philadelphia, to my sister. We were there for two months. In Philadelphia, we had a lot of relatives, and people were coming. A miracle happened. The Holocaust people they came. And asked, did you see this? Did you see that? Then, where were you? How was it? People were driving us crazy.

And they wanted us on radio, to go talk. We didn't want-- we were afraid. We were tired, and afraid, and scared of everything, you know. And the relatives-- I had an uncle who gave us clothing. He gave us money. And after two months-- yeah, as soon as I got to Philadelphia, a letter was already waiting from Lebovitz, who was supposed to be my second husband. A letter was waiting already that he's in Chicago.

And I didn't like the man. I really didn't want to marry him. But my relatives in Philadelphia-- [NON-ENGLISH]. He's a tailor. He's going to make you a good living. Living is very hard in America. You will have to work in factories. And marry him, you'll be better off. I says, but I don't like the man. Eh, you'll get used to him.

So the same year, in 1946, in December, I married him in Chicago. We went to a rabbi, you know, and got married. And in 1948, I had a boy with him, at age 40. I had-- yeah, from second marriage, I had a boy. Magda has a brother, a half brother. You know about it. No? She didn't tell you.

Well, she left out a lot. I saw her tape. She left out an awful-- and I left out too. You can't-- you can't tell it the way. But in my book, it's written down to the T, you know. And I took out the book, and I was amazed. Well, I read the book again a little bit, I couldn't remember it.

Anyway, so you married and you had your son.

In-- three years later-- although, we weren't planning to have a child anymore, you know. But that was the best thing that happened to me. That boy brought such a happiness in our life that I can't tell you how happy we were with him. He lost his two boys. He had two boys, the same age as Magda, one. They were going to school together. And his wife, and he lost 26 people out of his family-- 26 people.

And so he was very happy it was a boy. And he was weighing 9 pounds and 6 ounces. And it was just a joy. And, thank God, he grew up.

And your husband still was in the tailoring business, right?

No, not in the beginning. In the beginning, he worked in a ladies garment factory in Chicago. And I was raising the boy. When the boy was about six years old, and he went to school, then we-- then he bought a cleaning store, first. And I couldn't work full time, so Magda worked with him in the cleaning store for a while.

And then he sold that store. Magda got married, so he didn't want to keep the store by himself. And I couldn't work full time. I was sick too. I was very sick after the boy was born. I was sick before already, with gallbladder trouble. When I came back-- in the concentration camp, I didn't feel it. When I came back, I had a lot of trouble with gallbladder.

This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word generated with 3Play Media.
It is not the primary source, and it may contain errors in spelling or accuracy.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

So then he worked again in a garment factory, until we decided to get our own business. So we bought a business on Clark Street in Chicago.

Clark and where?

Clark, between Morris Avenue and-- between Morris and-- I forgot the other street. Anyway, you know Chicago? 6900 Clark Street, it was, our business. And we were there for 10 years, and I worked with him. It was cleaning and tailoring. He was a very good tailor, my husband. And I'm a dressmaker. We both worked.

So we worked ourselves up. But Magda and Ernie moved away from Chicago. And I was heartbroken. I couldn't live without Magda. We were so close. And also the boy grew up, thank God. And he wanted to be a doctor. Since he was a little boy, he wanted to be a doctor. [NON-ENGLISH]

So I says, all right. I says, that's going to cost a lot of money, and I don't know if we'll be able to fund it. But thank God, we moved away to Phoenix. And in Phoenix, we did a lot better than-- in Chicago, we did good too. But in Phoenix, we had a very nice business in Tower Plaza, in a shopping center.

That was built that time, when we rented it. Three months later, they finished it. And we moved in there and opened a brand new one.

Cleaning and tailoring.

No, not cleaning, just tailoring-- tailoring and custom made clothes.

Oh, I see.

We made men's clothes, and we also made some ladies clothes, but alterations both, ladies and men's. And the alteration was very lucrative because that pays good. And we did new clothes. And also, we took in ready-made sports clothes for men. And we were there for 10 years, in that shopping center. And we had customers from all over-- from Scottsdale, from all over. It was a very, very good place.

Then after 10 years, I says to my husband, let's sell it. Let's retire. I says, the boy is already a doctor. Thank God we don't have to-- it did cost us a lot of money, about $9,000, $10,000 a year for him to become a doctor.

And he promised us when he'll finish, when he'll become a doctor, he'll return to Phoenix to practice, and it never happened. And that broke our hearts, mainly his father's heart. Because he didn't have any children-- he lost his children. And this boy was to him his apples in his eyes.

So what happened, in the middle of going to medical school, he got married in the middle of it. He married a girl from Philadelphia. And she promised him that she will follow him to Phoenix, but it never happened. After she married him, no, she didn't want to come. So he remained there.

He's still in Philadelphia?

Sure. Not in Philadelphia, he's in a suburb now.

What kind doctor is he, internist?

No, he's a general practitioner.

Oh, a general practitioner.

Yeah, he's doing very well, thank God. So he married this girl, and she was a-- she was an art teacher. And she worked

This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word generated with 3Play Media.
It is not the primary source, and it may contain errors in spelling or accuracy.

too. So she helped a little bit to support him. So we didn't have to put out all the money ourselves for-- two years. But any time Sheldon writes-- mom or dad, I need snow tires, the money would go. Mom, I need this-- we always send them money.

So he was here recently, visiting me. He's a wonderful, wonderful son.

So what happened to your husband?

Yeah, after we sold our business, I says, let's retire. That's enough. Thank God, we had money saved up. And I says-- he was already almost 74, and I was 69. I said, let's retire. You don't want to-- we don't want to die in the store. So finally, after two years, we were able to sell the store. It wasn't easy to sell it.

And after we retired, we came to Philadelphia to visit our son, both of us. But when we moved away from Chicago, our friends and neighbors told us, why are you moving to Phoenix? You're going to dry up there, like prunes. It's very hot there. Who needs a tailor there? I'm telling you, we had more tailoring there than in Chicago.

And when we returned to-- back, two weeks later, from Philadelphia, visiting our son, we stopped in Chicago and visited our friends. And they couldn't get over how good we looked. We didn't dry up. And we looked-- both-- we both looked very good.

Came home, and we were planning in the fall to go to Israel. We were making passports and visas. It didn't happen. My husband died five months after retiring. He dropped dead of a heart attack.

After he retired-- five months after he retired.

Yeah. So you were on your own.

So he never came-- a day after he was buried, his passport arrived.

Who?

A day after he was buried, the passports arrived to go to Israel. So I didn't feel like going to Israel, but Magda and Ernie were going, and they talked me into going with them. And that was the best thing too, that I did. I went to Israel. And we were there for six weeks.

And after we came back, I said to the children-- I stayed with Magda and Ernie for two months. And after that, I said, everything is wonderful here. They wanted me to live with them. And I says, no. As long as I can take care of myself, I want to be on my own. I'm a [INAUDIBLE] for 50 years. I said, I can't stay with anybody else. So they agreed.

I says, I have to go home, and I have to get used to living by myself. And I went back. I couldn't stay in that house. I lived in-- I lived on 68th Street and Thomas Road, but not on Thomas Road, the second row of townhouses, in the back. I lived there in a beautiful townhouse.

But I was afraid-- I wasn't afraid in the concentration camp so much as I was afraid staying there alone in that house. Every little thing woke me up. I was-- so I thought to myself, I'm going to sell it, and I'm going to buy myself a condo at the Executive Towers. And that's what I did, a year later.

I didn't have to advertise anything. That was a beautiful place. A friend of mine told another friend that I want to sell my townhouse. They came over one Sunday, and they fell in love with it. And they wanted to buy it right away. I says, I can't sell it to you right away. I have to first see where I can move from here.

So she says, you can take your time, as long as you want, but this place is ours. And I sold it. I sold it to them for $59,000 that time. We bought it for $49,000. I sold it for-- and I made $10,000 on it. And lived only two years there. My husband lived only one year in it. And I left too. So that's the end.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

Yeah, now, how do people react to your background today?

Oh, you see, I forgot that. When I returned home, the neighbors didn't want to know us.

I mean today, how do people react to you today? Now, how do people, when you tell them about the Holocaust-- not Gentiles-- if you talk about the Holocaust, how do they--

Now?

--react? Yeah.

Well, I'll tell you, a lot of Gentile people read my book, and some of them liked it so much that they bought it from me, bought copies from me. But there are some who still don't believe it. But I forgot to tell you, when we returned from the concentration camp, to our town, how wild I was.

I was walking on the street one day, on the sidewalk, and a girl was coming against me. And I recognized my dress on her, that I made with my own hand. She comes, and I stop her. I says, where did you get this dress? She says, I bought it. I says, don't tell me. This dress is mine. You stole it. And tore it down, on the street from her. See, I forgot this.

Now, do you think Holocaust could happen again?

Yes.

Yes, it could happen.

It could. I'm sorry to say that, but--

Do you see anything in our world today that makes you think that, that it will happen?

Yes. It's because anti-Semitism is still very free, all over, all over the world. I'm sorry to say it, but-- not in our lifetime, I don't I don't think so. But in the future sometimes, that could happen again. Maybe not this-- not this bad. Maybe a little different, but it will happen.

You see, Mrs. Lebovitz, that's the reason why we do those videotapes too.

Yeah.

To show-- that will be in the museum, in the Holocaust Museum in Washington, and to show people who will visit, who will watch those tapes--

Yeah.

--that that's true. That's an eyewitness. They will see the eyewitness speaking. That's so important to let know the world really what happened. Maybe that will prevent from happening ever again.

Well, I hope so, but--

That's why I'm so thankful for you that you took your time. I know it's hard for you to go back to the bad time, to bad memories. I know it's very hard for you.

It's very hard.

And I'm very thankful for you that you took your time and come--

This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word generated with 3Play Media.
It is not the primary source, and it may contain errors in spelling or accuracy.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

You're welcome.

--to make this tape.

I am glad now too.

And I really-- I appreciate very much.

You know why I say that it could happen again? Look at the skinheads. The Pamyat in Russia. They call them Pamyat, something similar to the skinheads. And the Nazis in Germany, they still-- that is still going on. Anti-Semitism is still going on all over the world. They don't like us, that's all. They never liked the Jewish people, and I don't think there'll ever be complete peace.

Well, I hope you're wrong. I hope everything will be--

Yeah, I hope so, that I'm wrong.

All right, so thank you very much.

You're welcome.

This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word generated with 3Play Media.
It is not the primary source, and it may contain errors in spelling or accuracy.