

From the coming days.

Yes. Well, we can just check. Why don't you say something just now, anything you want.

Well, I'm pleased to be able to interview you, Hannah Lushan. My name is Barbara Bachner. Today is the 23rd of March, 1981. And we're in your home in Newton. It's very pleasant, very quiet this evening. I hope we'll have a nice tape. Well, I was wondering whether you could tell me a little bit about who was in your household when you were growing up.

OK. I was born in Sosnowiec, Poland. And I was the oldest. I had two younger sisters. And we were a middle class family.

Oh.

It's OK? That OK?

That will be fine.

OK. All right.

Yeah.

I was born in June 18, 1928.

And your father, you say, was middle class. Was he-- what was his occupation?

Well, they made the top of the shoes, whatever you want to call it.

Oh, yes, the leather.

Leathers, right.

They were probably out of leather-- from the uppers of shoes?

Right, the uppers of shoes.

Boots?

No, just mostly shoes. And this went to factories, where they made the whole shoe out of it.

The shoe, yeah.

And when the war broke out, I was 11 years old. And my parents believed in education. And I was going to public school till the fourth grade. And then the Germans wouldn't allow for Jewish children to go to school.

Was that-- was third grade when war broke out? Or was third grade before war broke out?

No. It was the third grade, in September.

1939?

Right.

OK.

So my mother and some neighbors, we were-- they were together and took a teacher for us so we can continue in secrecy.

In your home? No.

In the teacher's house. So we learned to have the education and also German because we thought it's important that we know this language. And we were there till about 1942, when they started to make ghettos. And then we had to leave our apartment and everything behind and go to ghetto. And that's outside the city. They called it Srodula.

Oh, that, was it a long way away?

No, just outside the city. And everyone had a room, every family--

Had one room.

--very small place.

Were you were allowed to take possessions with you?

Not really, just a few things that we had because the Poles that lived in that house, they moved in right into the apartment. And they threw us out of there.

So the Polish family inherited all your possessions?

Right.

And what-- did your father work until you were moved into the ghetto?

Well, he worked until the war broke out. Then there was no work for him.

And so he stayed in the house?

He stayed in the house. He also worked in the Jewish committee in Sosnowiec in various things.

You don't really know what he did. Do you know what your mother did before you moved to the ghetto? Do you remember?

Well, since I had younger sisters-- one was born in 1936, and one was born 1932. So they were really young. So she had to take care of us. And did you have any help in the house before?

Before the war? Yes, we had a Polish girl coming into the home few times a week and helping out.

Do you remember whether there were any difficulties with-- because of the Nazi regime before the war, for your family?

Did we go to [INAUDIBLE].

Well, in some parts of the country, there were problems for Jewish people already before the war broke out.

No, nothing.

There weren't any?

There were not problems where I came from.

Do you remember anything about when war was declared?

No, but I remember that in the fall, in 1939, children were talking about World War. I really couldn't understand what it meant. So I don't remember too much.

So your first memories of the war were connected with school?

With school.

Yes, which you talked about.

Right. And then when we moved into the ghetto, we lived with a grandfather because we couldn't get an apartment right away. And so in 1943, in early 1943, in January, there was a group of people surrounded by the Germans. And I was among them. And we were taken to a Dulag, it's called, or Durchgangslager, in Sosnowiec.

And we were there for about three or four weeks. And then they were selecting girls separate from the men. And I was selected with 30 women. And we were sent to Bolkenhain. And this was a slave labor camp. It was a weaving factory.

And there were about-- just about 200 girls in that camp-- it was a very small camp-- and mostly from Czechoslovakia and from Upper Silesia. So we worked there in weaving factories. Since I was small and young, and I couldn't take care of the weaving stool, I worked with threads, [GERMAN], as they call it.

Yes, right.

I don't know in English, how you would say.

Well, it would be the wool or the weft, perhaps.

Yeah, it was--

You mean the thread--

The threads, right.

--that they had to weave?

Right.

OK. So that would be the wool. So we worked there. And then in late October, in 1944, another group came, just about maybe 30 girls. And they told us that this was the end. There are no Jews left in Sosnowiec. It was Judenrein. And I knew at that time that no one was left. And I was all alone.

So we stayed there till about 1944. And we were sent away to Merzdorf because we were told that an ammunition factory worked there for the Germans. So in Merzdorf, we worked-- we had coals we had on a wheelbarrow as we had to take them one place to another. Just for a few months we were there.

And then one day, we were told again that we are going to Gränberg, which it was a larger camp for about 1,000 girls. And it was also a weaving factory.

What were the conditions like in the different settings that you were in, for example, in the Dulag, first of all?

In the Dulag, we were just waiting to be selected and to send away.

Yes. So how were things? How might you spend a day there?

Well, just laying on the bunk beds and waiting. And we didn't know what was going to happen to us. So to have it, people were sent away for something they should answer. And so they were not able to work.

And how did you manage to feed yourselves?

Well, in Dulag, they fed us with soup and a slice of bread. This was in Sosnowiec. This was still outside the camp.

And at that time, were you still with your grandfather and your family?

No.

Oh, you had already been separated?

I had already been separated.

And when you were rounded up?

Right. I never-- since then, I never saw them.

Nobody?

Nobody.

Did you get any news or information?

No news, except that in the late October, when the last group came to Bolkenhain, we were told that there was no one left. This was the last, actually, selection. And the rest went to Auschwitz and Birkenau. That's all I knew.

So then once you got to Bolkenhain, what were conditions like there? How did you travel?

Well, we traveled by train at that time. It was just a small group, like 30 girls. And two soldiers was with us.

How were you treated?

Well, I remember very slightly, just like a dream, till I came to that camp. And it was a small camp, just a few girls. So compared what I hear to others, some others, that we were not treated so bad, but as long as we did our job, that we work there.

How long was your working day?

Well, there were two shifts. One was from 6:00 till 3:00 and then from 3:00 till midnight. And in the morning, we'd have a slice of bread, and a piece of margarine, and a little jam. I really don't remember what we drank, maybe water.

Yes. So then you were rounded up? And you had to march?

To march, yeah, since the factory wasn't too far. Wasn't too far. And we were in barracks, living in barracks with two bunk beds, one top of each other.

Were you-- was it cold?

Well, we-- let's see, imagine, then spring came. So it wasn't too bad. We had just blankets. And we had clothes with us. They didn't take away again. We were left without because, of course, everything worn out. We didn't get anything new. And of course, in those camps, we had showers, but cold showers, in both of them. In Bolkenhain, it wasn't too bad. Then we went to larger camps, like Gr nberg. In Gr nberg, was a little bit difficult to get clothes.

What happened in Merzdorf?

In Merzdorf, we just went there to-- for a couple of months because they didn't know. We were supposed to go to Oranienburg, but it was changed. The plans were changed. And [INAUDIBLE].

So you think you just did some weaving there too?

No. Because--

That was in--

--it was just the coal that we had to wheel them on wheelbarrows.

Did the coal come from a mine? Or did it come on the train?

From the trains.

From the trains. And then you shoveled them.

Shoveled them, yeah. We did that.

And this was taken to the factory?

That was it. Had to take from one place to another, just girls, no men.

Yeah. Did you shovel it? Or did you have to lift it by hand?

We had to lift it and put on wheelbarrows and take from one place to the other. Well, then, of course, we were not too long there. And we were sent away again, sent to know a little bit, about the weaving factory that they sent us to Gr nberg. Another day, we made blankets for the soldiers.

So you said, conditions were harder?

Harder, much harder.

What was it like?

Because from the dust-- first of all, we didn't have much food. And from the dust, a lot of women got sick. They had tuberculosis. And every week, we had to be examined by a doctor so that it won't spread. And they were sent away to Auschwitz.

You must have dreaded those exams. Did you dread the exam? Were you scared when you had to be examined?

Exams? Very, very scared, yes. And since I was really the young girl from-- the group took care of me. But my-- I was so skinny, I really wasn't hungry. Maybe I didn't eat so much soup like others.

So you had a number of friends?

Well, yes. There were two sisters that they took care of me. And then I met another couple of girls that were very

friendly to me. And we were always together. In GrA^{1/4}nberg, in 19-- in the beginning of 1945, a group of Hungarian girls came from Auschwitz. They worked, oh, I don't for how long.

But when they came, they looked so terrible, in rags, and they had bleeding from legs. They had no shoes. And it was a horrible scene. So we knew that something happened. But the next day, we were told that we will join them on a march, what they called a death march.

They called it that?

The death march, yeah. We were split into groups. One group went, which I found out after the war, to Bergen-Belsen. And I was in a group that we were liberated in Czechoslovakia. We were marching for three months, not knowing where we are going.

The death march lasted a long time.

Right.

How many girls or women were there in your group?

Well, it was like maybe-- well, altogether, there were 3,000 of us because we were 1,000 as we came from Auschwitz. And we were about 1,500. That's what I was told.

In your group?

In my group. And we slept in barracks. We went out. It was really the snow high to the-- we were working in snow. We took a few things with us, like a rucksack that we had in the camp. But after we walked miles and miles, we couldn't because it was too heavy. So we just threw it away.

How were you dressed-- a coat, anything?

Just whatever we had.

Do you remember how you were dressed?

I remember, I had a jacket on. And it fit.

Was it a warm jacket?

Maybe. Maybe. I don't remember what it was. And I know it was a jacket that I left from home. And I was wearing the skirts and shoes.

This clothing on?

Just clothing, whatever we have on hand. [INAUDIBLE]. And that's the way we started to walk.

And when did you start marching?

During the night, we slept in barracks. But during the day, all day, we walked. We walked until the--

Now, did you work-- this was in winter?

This was in winter, in late January.

January, right.

It was January. We walked. We didn't know where we going. And who couldn't make it, they were shot. And every morning, there were a few dead and lying there. And they didn't make it through the night there. There was no facilities to do anything to the bathroom and a huge [INAUDIBLE].

And we went to a barn, where the people were closed. You had a little hot-- some water. And sometimes, you didn't have. I remember a friend of mine stole a potato. And she was running. But where they stopped, she was shot. She had-- we always had to be five in a row.

So did you-- were you in a row with all your friends?

My friends, yes.

How did you encourage each other to keep going?

Well, we hoped that maybe that we might be liberated. And just we hoped that was going.

Did you talk to each other?

Well, very little. There was not much to say. We were there. And we prayed and we hoped that everything would be fine. Certain days, it was very bad for us. So we thought maybe to work [INAUDIBLE]. And some days, they were good. And they were [INAUDIBLE].

They let you rest sometimes during the day?

Sometimes.

When you marched along, did you see people?

Well, in the first couple of months, no. But then it was [INAUDIBLE]. They didn't know themselves where they are going. And then we saw Germans lifting this, how do you say that?

Then people who were fleeing?

Fleeing and people that didn't have homes anymore because they were bombed. [INAUDIBLE]

And did you ever see any regular citizens along this?

I remember we went into a city. I don't remember the name of it. But there was bread with those people where they took that [INAUDIBLE]. And we went to [INAUDIBLE] undressed us. Right away, they would put [INAUDIBLE]. And we found a way through, heading to the light like we were [INAUDIBLE].

And what-- how many of your friends were with you later on in the night?

Well, the truth is that were some-- I'd say some friendly-- these were like passengers on the [INAUDIBLE]. We became very good friends. And then when I was the girls that we [INAUDIBLE] together, they took care of me. In fact, that-- we were planning to run away, but we were afraid. Once we [INAUDIBLE], we were afraid that we wouldn't get. We didn't want somebody else to get that.

So we spent all this time together. And we were always [INAUDIBLE]. We stuck together. I spoke the language. And we were together. We both was wandering, liberated. The ones who had [INAUDIBLE] could go on. [INAUDIBLE]

And [INAUDIBLE], one of the sisters her mom was hiding, [INAUDIBLE]. And we helped each other. And I'm the only one from the 100 [INAUDIBLE]. Nothing left there in the [INAUDIBLE].

Then we went to Dresden. And from Elbe, we walked to [INAUDIBLE]. And it was left when we found it. And we were here. We went to a farmer. And we found many things. But we needed [INAUDIBLE].

And that was the [INAUDIBLE]. So sometimes, I wasn't that happy about it. And he said that he saw a-- he was also in [INAUDIBLE]. And he stayed with a girl. [INAUDIBLE] Because they were dressed like [INAUDIBLE]. But they left. And we came in. He said that he went to Dachau. He was there. And we [INAUDIBLE].

[INAUDIBLE]

I don't remember it. I was 32. But I remember [INAUDIBLE].

Do you think perhaps [INAUDIBLE]-- was it planned with the [INAUDIBLE]?

[INAUDIBLE]

And I have a feeling that you probably [INAUDIBLE].

[INAUDIBLE]

And writing?

Writing, I remember, yeah. I do remember.

And playing?

Playing, again. And I remember when we went into a town. There were a few girls there [INAUDIBLE].

And then did you go in your homes there?

Yes. We were in houses too. This was in there-- I don't remember the [INAUDIBLE].

You can put this on the paper. I'll just check that this side's working before we start. OK. Yes.

I think it was Helga. [INAUDIBLE]. I don't remember it was a [INAUDIBLE]. But I remember that we did have to take off our clothes because they were filled to the brim with lice. So after this, we got otherwise-- I could get a short dress-- a long dress. I was a short girl. And tall girls that got a short dress. [INAUDIBLE]

So we didn't have our clothes that you brought with you. [INAUDIBLE] did. We didn't know what to do with that. We heard there that the war about to end. [INAUDIBLE] But we got there. We had some dinner from the Polish people on the way. [INAUDIBLE]

Was this from other [INAUDIBLE] prisoners?

Prisoners, yes. I think there were maybe political prisoners. So one day, again, we were [INAUDIBLE].

And you still had your friends here, did you?

No. no. I had [INAUDIBLE].

And so you had whatever-- you didn't-- whatever you had, you had. And in the homestretch was-- you lived in a barrack?

In a barrack, yes. It was a barrack. I remember [INAUDIBLE]. I was so young, I'd never had them. And then we went

again on that.

What time of year was it when you left there?

It must have been sometime in April, I think. Must have been there around April. And then we walked again and again. I don't remember. We walked to a home [INAUDIBLE].

Oh, did it? For hope-- blessing?

Yes. Yeah, something starting.

I'm not sure which Baden it would be. I do have a map of the place.

But all I remember, it was [INAUDIBLE]. They had no choice. They had to go too [INAUDIBLE]. The so under a small

Were your friends already with you?

They were-- the group that I was together were there with me, yes. Then I remember going to a town Langendorf. And we stopped-- we went [INAUDIBLE]. It was just the three of us. And then we heard a lot of soldiers over there going back and forth to those barracks.

German soldiers?

German soldiers, yes. When we were stuck in the woods--

[INAUDIBLE]?

[INAUDIBLE] Well, it was outside Langendorf, right. It was before Langendorf. And was established a room. And we were there for hours. We didn't know why we are sitting so long. So once again, [INAUDIBLE] we could hide behind some trees. Well, we really weren't afraid because we [INAUDIBLE].

And thanks to the people [INAUDIBLE]. And we thought, maybe, they really weren't there. So I remember, there was a stream-- is-- do you call it a stream for that? And one of the girls went by [INAUDIBLE], there is a little stream. And you can hide there. And we were going on.

Now, for a few minutes, [INAUDIBLE]. We were living in barracks. We were sitting there for hours, and hours, and hours. And then we were surrounded by [INAUDIBLE].

And after a few hours, one of the girls came out and yelled, we are free. And so we came out. Well, we all came out of there. [INAUDIBLE] Well, 12 of us [INAUDIBLE] to see where we're at, that we were in-- we were in [INAUDIBLE]. And once, the next morning, and nobody speaks German. [INAUDIBLE] But we looked at it, we could understand it. [INAUDIBLE]

Well, we were liberated. It was the Russians found us. [INAUDIBLE] because we looked like some creatures without [INAUDIBLE]. There was a bunch of beds in a room. And the German soldiers, they [INAUDIBLE].

Oh, you didn't survive from it? Or they'd be--

Well, business-like.

They're prisoners from a concentration camp.

Yes. They had a very [INAUDIBLE]. And the police went and opened it. [INAUDIBLE] We came back.

[INAUDIBLE] One of the girls knocked at the door. It was a German's house. [INAUDIBLE] And she told them that we are-- we left our families. But we had [INAUDIBLE].

And every day, they gave us to eat. And we were crying [INAUDIBLE]. One of the girls comes back into the house. And each of you can stay. You can all stay. So on the third day, he takes us-- he will take us to the [INAUDIBLE], four kilometers. [INAUDIBLE]

So this was on a Thursday. [INAUDIBLE] Well, this is a [INAUDIBLE]. And we were ready to go along the way. Then there was a [INAUDIBLE] woman and two of her sons were holding. And they have a house, also Catholic.

[INAUDIBLE]

On the way, though, the Americans got there. [INAUDIBLE] So with this [? problem-- ?] I mean, we didn't know them.

[INAUDIBLE]

[INAUDIBLE]

At once?

At once, right, at once there. And we couldn't talk. [INAUDIBLE] [? Polack. ?] [INAUDIBLE]

[INAUDIBLE]

Yeah. And this was Brandenburg. But it was a very small village. And we were [INAUDIBLE]. We couldn't go far because it wasn't-- we had to really [INAUDIBLE]. Most places were only open to [INAUDIBLE]. Most took the rest of the-- whoever was survived, was liberated [INAUDIBLE].

Did you want to join them?

No.

No.

No. We stayed in Langendorf. And then we went [INAUDIBLE] because we didn't want to stay at the camp. [INAUDIBLE] I wouldn't leave her there behind. [INAUDIBLE] I mean, this was like [INAUDIBLE].

[INAUDIBLE]

Yeah. And from there, we took off the road.

But did the Americans provide transport? Or each time, from Brandenburg?

[INAUDIBLE] In fact, I have some questions

Oh, really?

[INAUDIBLE] and [? apples, ?] but I never touched them. So that's the way I was liberated. In fact, one of my friends who was there went one evening and one who is in-- now who are in Israel. One is in Brooklyn Heights and Harlem. And the other sister's in New York. And the third one is someplace else. I don't really know.

But I met one of the girls. In fact, I'm in touch with the close one in Israel. So we lived there together. In Munich, I met my other friend that wrote that book, Helga. And I finally was [INAUDIBLE]. Yeah, she wrote a good book.

Well, Hannah, were you very ill when you got to Munich?

In Czechoslovakia, well, there was another girl that she ran away [INAUDIBLE]. I really didn't know her. But she was always with us. I remember that the other girls were friends with her. And [INAUDIBLE].

And none of you could?

No, we couldn't But we were like [INAUDIBLE]. And in Munich, we were in this place [INAUDIBLE]-- we could go there for the clothes. [INAUDIBLE]. And the girls [INAUDIBLE] And we stayed there. And they gave us an apartment. And we finally went back to [INAUDIBLE] just to give, the HIAS, the rest of them [INAUDIBLE].

You got it from the central distribution point? Was it the Red Cross?

No, it was the Joint, a Joint Distribution. And they had that [INAUDIBLE].

So you went in different directions?

No, we were still together, but like for a day or two, we went to different cities around there. It was in Bavaria. And one day, two men were [INAUDIBLE] I met my husband. He was living there.

And this was in the spring?

This was in February-- no, January.

January 1946?

'46.

How did you have the money? You had the money to travel along.

We traveled-- well, we went by train. And by train [INAUDIBLE] that I decided to stay. they got it OK Yeah for three days I With this, I went to Bergen-Belsen. That's the only way I could go. And from Bergen-Belsen-- in Bergen-Belsen, there's-- someone told me that he's [INAUDIBLE]. They also another provider, [INAUDIBLE]. There was a man from [PLACE NAME].

Well, then did you return? Or did you have--

Yes, I did go back. And then--

So you went back to this tiny village called?

[INAUDIBLE]. It's a very tiny village. And then my husband came to visit me there once. And then my girlfriend was already on the way to Israel, to Haifa. She went on to Israel. She wanted us to go with her. [INAUDIBLE]

You were?

Yeah. I remember then [INAUDIBLE] they didn't to go to Israel. They went to Cyprus. Well, she wanted me to go with them.

[INAUDIBLE]. When she found out that her mother was [INAUDIBLE].

So had you any employment between the time you met your husband and when you decided to get married? That wasn't possible?

No. I wouldn't work for the Germans.

Right.

[INAUDIBLE]

And did you register?

No, because after we got married, my husband got taken to--

[INAUDIBLE]

And now, she was born in west?

In West Germany, in GÃ¼tersloh.

Oh, where is that place then?

[INAUDIBLE]

Mhm. Yes. Mhm.

[INAUDIBLE]

So then how old was she when--

When we came here, she was six months old. She was born in May, and we came in late November.

It must have been difficult to get while made even though you had-- in Germany?

Well, only [INAUDIBLE]

So now, we're going-- we're going to talk about leaving Germany.

I got married--

Yeah, right.

--in 1947. And we left in that [INAUDIBLE]. And my husband [INAUDIBLE]. He's still alive. And he lives [INAUDIBLE]. So he [INAUDIBLE] And I wrote him back that I'm expecting a child. So we had to wait till 1949. And then [INAUDIBLE].

Well, and we received the papers in September of 1949. We had to go to a DP camp called [PLACE NAME] or whatever. And then we went to Bremerhaven. Because I had a child, I was allowed to go by plane. So we didn't come by ship. My uncle made sure to pay [INAUDIBLE].

We left in November in Bremerhaven, our plane. It took 24 hours to fly there at that time. Was, I remember, a Scandinavian plane. And we stopped in Scotland. And then we stopped in [PLACE NAME] and I believe in Canada, it was. And then we came to New York, LaGuardia.

And at the airport, we were told that we are going to a train to Boston. [INAUDIBLE] But someone's there. We couldn't go by plane to Boston. And then we were greeted there. But I didn't know how he looked like. I think [INAUDIBLE].