

OK. So when you were in Auschwitz, and the--

They brought us into those-- we called them saunas. They were the places that they just made the selections.

And they shaved--

Shaved.

They had already shaved your hair.

They shaved the hair. They took off-- they took all the clothes away, whatever we had, which wasn't good. They gave us the wooden shoes. And the suits were like from Russian, I don't know, [CROSS TALK].

Burlap, or--

Burlaps or something like this, and little kerchiefs. And then they made the numbers.

And your-- I see your number now. It's 47668.

--668.

And how did they-- they made the number with a--

With needles. And mine, see, like, this thing is very light. It somehow, it didn't grip. And this means, like, the [INAUDIBLE] Star of David. And they tried to make it over. And they just didn't grip, because they were afraid that I, God forbid, shouldn't say that I wasn't Jewish. Do you--

So but somehow it didn't grip. They did it so many times, and it just didn't grip.

And was the number in order? Like, the number before you was 47667?

Yes, I have-- oh, yeah, we have-- I have friends that we were very close. It came like the ABC, something by names. But then you didn't have a name. That was the number.

But we have people that came the same time with me, that in New York. And this, that they have the-- almost-- the 47s, and they have 48 or 60, these-- very close, because we stayed one behind the other. And then they put us in blocks.

They made selections.

Then some of them-- I didn't see this. Us that they brought, the girls, that we came together, the men that weren't with us, just the girls, they put us in a block. It was Block 2. And we stayed there for a while.

But there they took us to work the next day, outside. Punishment. Just carrying the biggest stones that we have had now. I don't know. Building roads, and building things. You name it. Just I think it was all--

And those that took care of us, they were civilian Germans. Meanies. If you didn't do right, they used to kill you. I worked in a Kommando. There was 100-- it's called 103. It was the worst.

Who was the commander? Well, the commander from the whole-- from the concentration camp, from Birkenau, was Hoessler.

Were you in Birkenau then?

Birkenau. They shipped us right-- I mean, it's called Auschwitz, but really we were the part of Birkenau, because Auschwitz was a different-- the whole area there, there was a lot of--

The city was Auschwitz.

Auschwitz, yeah. We were-- I--

Birkenau was a labor camp?

Well, it wasn't a labor camp. All the crematoriums were in Birkenau. My block--

So the camp was called Birkenau.

Birkenau, yeah. And we went to-- rains, shines, we went to work. I mean--

Did everyone work?

Most of them. I mean, they select you. You're going to go-- some of them were a little luckier. They had a little better Kommando to go to. I wasn't. I went to-- this was the worst.

And every morning, 6 o'clock or 5 o'clock, they woke you up. You had to get up fast, go to Appell. And then you got a little water. And they shipped you out to work.

You didn't eat anything. They didn't give you any bread in the morning?

The bread was at night. They gave you, when you came from-- at night, they gave you the little soup and they gave you a little bread. And doing-- where you worked, they used to bring some soups, and they give you. It was like water. I don't know. But it was better than nothing.

The men were in a different place?

We used to see the men, but we didn't talk to them. They worked too. But we didn't-- I mean, we didn't talk to them. Just maybe a word. You were afraid to say something. And--

You were with other women.

Oh, yes.

What was the age? Were they mostly--

A friend of mine-- I have two friends here that-- one of them is in Florida now. One lives in Brookline. She's from [PLACE NAME]. But she worked in the beginning with me. Then she got out and she worked in a different place.

What's her name?

Rose Mueller.

Oh, I know her.

Yeah. OK. We come from the same city from Poland.

Mm-hmm. Really?

Yeah. We were in Majdanek together. We were in Birkenau together. We were liberated together.

And from there, every few months, they used to take you in, see who was already done.

You mean who should be sent to the gas chamber.

Gas chamber. Who couldn't work already, because it didn't take too long not to be able to do that, because you just fell like flies.

How old were you at the time?

That time, I must have been already 15.

And then we came on the block, and they said they need different people for work. They-- to the Weberei. And they picked me. And that was the best thing ever happened to me. I was inside already.

To work where?

It was like in blocks. It wasn't outside. We used to make things like for the planes. I don't know what it was called. In Germany you used to call the Weberei. And they picked me, and I went already in a different block, and I wasn't outside. I was already covered. I wasn't with the rain.

And then there was this German. She was an SS. And she looked at me. She like, somehow, I reminded her probably of somebody, because my hair by then started growing in. And she took me out from that place, that it was good too, to a little different room that they used to-- had just papers.

And there they were all Poles. But they for different reasons. Like--

Political prisoners?

Political, whatever. They didn't like it.

They didn't like the fact that a Jew was there?

I don't know. They didn't like me. But I, for me, it was the best thing that ever-- I mean, I was inside. And when they gave the soup, I got from the bottom already. I had the thick stuff. And I said, gee, that's already, like, a good night in paradise.

And she didn't say nothing, that SS. But she just brought me in there. Maybe somebody's good to me.

And when one sees already that you were a little different, the other one that used to take care of us, she was a little different here too. She didn't hit you already. You were different. And I was in a different block. And I worked there. And that--

What did you do there?

We used to cut little paper, things. This was like probably for them, for--

Pads of paper.

Not papers. They made things there for planes or things. We used to cut little-- it was--

Patterns?

Cottons, patterns. I don't even know what. I just knew-- I didn't care what it was-- that I wasn't outside, that the rain

didn't come on me that I was always soaking wet.

After-- but then, a few-- I worked there a few weeks, they take me out, and they pushed me back out inside where with all the people. It wasn't bad either. I didn't care. As long I was, like I said, I was covered, I wasn't outside that the rain came on me or-- and I was hit every two minutes. If you didn't put in a lot of dirt in your thing that you carried, you, right away, you got a few over your head.

A few-- you were hit.

Hit. But that German came in, and she said where I was. So they told her they ship me out. She brought me back in there. And I worked there. And it was just like somebody wants me really to live, because I had a little more thick. I didn't have the water from the soup. I had the thick stuff already from the back. And I was inside.

Did she ever come and talk to you during the day?

No, no, no. She didn't. But you could feel that she probably cared for me, that maybe she picked me because I was different. I don't know why. But for me, it was like somebody came and said-- gave you something that you feel like you-- you're going to survive. You're not going to die right away. And on the block, and it was everything.

Then, a few months later, they call out our names. I was registered, much older there. I wasn't 15. But I don't remember. Every time I went in the different block, I said something else.

Why did you register for being older?

Because we knew that the children, they take away. They don't want you. That if you couldn't-- you could see, if you couldn't work, they didn't need you. They said, all the children-- I mean, the young-- the numbers. And I knew there were few behind. And then everybody walked away to work. I said, now we're ready. I think my aunt came.

They let-- they told everyone who was under the--

It seemed to be, because they didn't tell you. But whoever stayed behind was young. I knew.

And you stayed behind. And I stayed behind. Said now, I figured the end is coming because they don't want you already. Everybody went to work, even that German, that she was a private German. And she was for different kinds.

She wasn't-- she must have been a good person. I don't know what she was. But she felt for me. She says, [SPEAKING GERMAN]. I shouldn't be afraid. I'll come back to work. I'll be coming back tomorrow. But if she meant it or not, I don't know, because I started crying right away. I knew something bad is going to happen.

And then everybody went to work, and they brought us into that place where they select you. And it wasn't just from our block. It was from a lot of them. And that Hoessler and another one.

You saw Hoessler. Yeah, he looked at us. And he comes over to me, and he looked at me. He says, [SPEAKING GERMAN], that I look like a doll. I have very kinky hair, and when they started growing in.

And then he says to me, [SPEAKING GERMAN]. Like in English, what are you? And I said-- this is something-- I knew that what I was going to say. And I said, [SPEAKING GERMAN]. Too bad I'm Jewish. That's exactly what I said. And he walked away.

But the girls, they could see. And they don't have to tell you nothing. They just take your number and that's it, OK?

And I said, it was-- I don't know. I said, gee, now I'm going to go already.

They sent us back to the blocks. And then again, the same thing happened, and he was there a few times. I don't know

why they did it.

A couple of days later.

No, a few weeks later. I'm mixing this up a little, because I don't--

I understand, but let me just say something. But did they take any of the children?

They took plenty. Ooh, they took--

But they didn't take you.

No, I was out. My girlfriend's sister, they took. Then a few weeks later, they do the same thing. And I recognize him. And I knew that maybe he-- and he says, [SPEAKING GERMAN]. I said, [SPEAKING GERMAN] in the Weberei. He asked me.

Yeah, because when they take you in, he just, because he wanted to see what I'm doing, if I'm good enough for work, or not just to me, to everybody. Must have been a hundred or more.

And I said to him in German-- I spoke very fluently German then-- I said, [SPEAKING GERMAN]. Just like I want to be there. [SPEAKING GERMAN]. I don't want to go no place else.

So you told him that you worked in the Weberei. In the Weberei, and I don't want to go no place else.

And he says to me, [SPEAKING GERMAN]. He throw me out, like, go out. And I went out. I said, [INAUDIBLE]. I felt-- he told me to get dressed and out.

And another girl said the same thing. I don't know what she did, because I didn't wait already to-- as long he told me to go out.

What did that mean when he told you to go out?

To go out. He didn't take me. I felt like he-- either he recognized me or this. I don't know. Because from the last time, it's like he felt bad for me that I'm a Jew or something. And I felt like he would recognize me because my girlfriends, those that were older, they didn't go, they said, if he's going to be there, tell him you want to come back. Tell him you don't want to go, but they send you. Just like this and cry. And I did it, exactly what the7--

And he said, I should go out. They didn't send me. I don't know what happened to the others, but I didn't. They sent me back to the block.

How many did-- how many--

There were quite a-- a lot there.

And they only sent a few back? On my block, I was the only one, I think, because there weren't too many already. And since then, already, nobody touched me. And I was there. And so the girls used to tell me, said, if you wanted to do something that you don't have to work hard, or get some clothes, or get something, you should go to him. Maybe he'll help you.

I says, I'm helped already. I'm working under with a roof. I don't work outside. I don't want to go no place. I just want to stay with you. And that's what happened. And I stayed there till they shipped us out.

But I was already in Auschwitz, in Birkenau, and I worked in the same place.

In the Weberei.

Weberei, till the end, till the Russians started to go. You could hear bombs and things like this. That's when they started shipping us out. This was already for the following year. But I-- the whole--

'44.

'44. But in '44, in the '43, '43 I was in the 103 Kommando, which was bad. Dead was better. Then, when I went to the Weberei I stayed there till almost to the end, that it was bad already too with them, but we didn't know.

It was bad with the Germans because the Germans were losing the war, you mean.

Probably, but we didn't know that much. We had that-- when the Sonderkommando blew everything up. And I thought for sure that's when they're going to be-- we saw it. And they made us all come out.

So you were in Auschwitz about a year?

More.

In--

No, in-- I was two years in Auschwitz, from '43 till '45 at the beginning. I was two years.

I see.

I was two years. But--

Was that unusual, that someone survived in Auschwitz for two years? Well, a few of my friends. Must have been because I was strong. And I was young.

And also because you were selected to work in the Weberei.

In the Weberei. It could be.

All right. So I wanted to ask you a couple of questions about being in camps, OK?

Yeah.

Could you tell me a little bit about the guards they had there? They were German guards?

German guards.

Were there any kapos?

Kapos, yeah, we had kapos.

And who were they?

Most of our kapos with-- they were Jews, probably. But they were Czechoslovakians.

Male? Female?

Ours were female. Female.

And did they live with you in the-- they had different-- like, they had a little-- we lived on those-- maybe you saw those in Birkenau, the 1, 2, 3, and you maybe check.

Bunk beds.

Bunk beds. And they had little, when you walked in, they had little rooms. They looked like they lived better. They didn't sleep with us and they didn't eat with us. They just took, made sure that if they had 200, that the 200 got up, the 200 went to sleep, and the 200 came back from work, and the-- whatever.

How was someone picked to become a kapo?

I don't know. This I don't know. Because they weren't-- our girls weren't. They were all from different countries, and mostly we were Czech.

And what were your-- you had clothes that you wore to work, and you wore those clothes all the time. Did you ever change those clothes? You know something? Like, the girls that used to work in the-- the Kleidungskamme where they took out from dead, those that, from-- those that went to the crematoriums. There was a lot of girl that worked there. And if they found something that they could get dressed in, and then bring it back, and I gave them mine, maybe it was a little better. But that's how you got the clothes.

Now how about-- I'm asking you questions because I'm just-- the very little things about life that one doesn't think of, one takes for granted these days--

I don't see. That's--

How about bathing? Was there any way to--

We used to go in-- they had the toilets where you washed. You washed your little-- your face. The only time you didn't want to go bathing is when they took you, when they selected you. That's when we had showers. You didn't want to go then, believe me.

Did you know then about the gas chambers?

Yeah, we knew that if they take you out, you're sick already, you're going to go, because the crematoriums, you could see them burn. They-- I was on the block. My block was the end, and then there were the wires, and you could see the crematoriums.

And you knew what was going on there?

Yes, then we knew already. When we used to walk to work from-- in the morning from Birkenau to the Weberei, we used to cross the tracks that brought in all these-- the trains. And we used to see, get off, people. And we used to think, if they only knew where they going. We knew, but they didn't know.

Sometimes people went straight to the gas chambers?

Right.

They didn't even make a selections.

No, these transports, all of them towards the end, in 1944, they didn't go to Birkenau. Most of it went right-- right in. The trains were right in.

And then the crematoriums burned day and night. And you could smell the bones. You could get sick. Because you just like, you fry fat or something. And at night, the sky was red, day and night. Most of them, then they didn't take in.

In the beginning, if they brought in people from different parts. But then most of them that they used to bring in with all the people already and children. And we used to see them, because we used to cross the-- in order to go to the place that we worked, we used to cross the trains. Sometimes they used to keep them, not let us go by, and then take him off. We used to see everything.

I remember when-- that was towards the end already, when they felt probably that they're losing or something. We used to walk. We didn't work in the Weberei already then. It was all different. It was, like, mixed up.

So we worked outside. We used trains, something. I don't know. It wasn't too far from the crematoriums.

And all of a sudden, we used to hear alarms. They used to tell us to lie down. And I said, gee, this was good. We figured somebody doing something. What, when, we didn't now.

So like air raids.

Air raids. And then, after the air raid was gone, we used to get up again to go to work. And we used to-- it was right near the crematoriums.

Did you ever see any planes bomb--

No.

I mean, not German planes, but, let's say, United States--

No, no, no. We just knew that if some air raid is on, something is going on.

You saw planes flying overhead?

No, we didn't hear. They probably flew very, very high, that you didn't hear. Sometimes you could hear just noise, like from a plane, but not to see. When they go over, they probably go very, very high.

But we knew that for us, it was something like we're resting. We said, we should be going on a whole day. And so we wouldn't have to get up and go to do the same things.

But by then, it was already-- that was like fall in 1944. It was the-- like maybe October, November. And by then I know that's-- they didn't bring in any more people. They started already to break up some of them. You could feel that something is going on.

Because we went in. I walked into the crematorium. We saw everything what's going on there. But they didn't burn then already. It was almost the end of '44.

You could walk into the crematorium?

We worked there. Like I said, our path, this. So you walked around. I went in.

At the end, you started working in the crematorium? You would clean it up afterwards?

They were breaking. Like some of them, we took the stones, or whatever. Not really, but we were around there. I saw it.

Do you have any idea how big the camp was? Like, how many blocks were there?

We had a lot of-- I was on-- when I first came on the Camp 1. Then we were Camp 2. And this was all Birkenau. Was in Block 2. Then I was in Block 13. Then I was in Block 27, which was the end of the camp. That's where were the



crematorium.

How many people were in each block?

Oh, I don't even--

Hundreds?

Oh, it must have been a few hundred. A few hundred. A few hundred. Because the block was big. And in each place, you slept maybe five, six people or more, or maybe 10. And there were, like, three layers. They weren't like the two beds, bunk beds. These were the big ones, like when you saw-- when they showed the Holocaust, and they show those-- that's exactly what they looked like.

OK. Were there any-- so were there any non-Jews in the camps too?

There were, but not with us. They were in different blocks. They were, like, for political or for crimes, whatever they did. There were a few Poles. Because I know there were Russians because one time-- this was in Birkenau-- at night they gave you a piece of bread, or sometimes they gave you something with it. And I didn't want the piece of salami, whatever it was, or liverwurst. I don't know what this. Then said, we're going to go to another block and exchange it and I'll get more bread. I only wanted bread.

I walk there with the bread, and all of a sudden comes this-- she must have been Polish or Russian. I don't know. And she grabbed my bread. And I didn't want to give it to her.

So she had those things that the Germans eat in, or any-- I don't know what you call them, the things that you eat when you're in the army.

Like mess kits, or like a little bowl.

It's not a bowl. It's like a little thing with a handle. It's made of iron or something. And she hit me. And I still have a mark her. And the blood was coming out terrible. And I was-- and I thought I have no eye already. And I was afraid to go to the place where they can do something.

Finally, I came into the block, and that-- the one that took care of us, she said, you've got to go to that hospital. They have to do something because the-- the blood they couldn't stop.

So I came in there, and they just-- they didn't do stitches, but they did something for me. I was afraid if I go in, they'll take me, because I'm probably no good already. See, you always thought if something is going to happen to you, they're going to take you away. And they fixed me up.

But she-- they said if I could recognize her? See, they didn't want you, somebody else should hit you. If they hit you, that's all right. But I wouldn't recognize her. Was in the dark. And I know she was a Pole.

They had a hospital there.

Yeah. But if you went in there, you weren't sure that you're going to come out at once. Because there they used to go through almost every day, find if you are sick already or something, out. They didn't want to keep you. They didn't care to make you well.

Right.

That's what I was afraid to go with this, because I figured they're going to keep me there and I won't come out. From there, I knew exactly that if I go in there-- somehow you figured, if you're healthy, maybe-- I don't know if we knew that we're going to survive, or we're going to be free someday. This I don't think--

We just wanted to live. This I know. But what's going to happen later, if we're going to survive or there's going to be a bullet or something, I don't think-- I never thought about it.

But I knew that I wanted to live, that I tried hard. Whenever something would happen, I figured this is good. This is good. Something good happened to me, that maybe I'm going to survive.

And then, after this already, this was the end, they started shipping out from Auschwitz already.

Shipping out from Auschwitz?

Yeah. Because Auschwitz was really part of Poland, Poland's border. So I didn't go with the first shipment, again. I always was towards the end. And a lot of my friends, they would-- I mean, you had no-- this was no choice.

Why were they shipping out of Auschwitz?

They shipped them in deeper to Germany. See, Auschwitz then, as we found out later, the Russians occupied it at the end of '44. And we still, we were in different blocks already. They were pushing us from one place to the other. Other shipments came in from different places. They didn't know what to do already.

So they shipped-- they brought us in to wash someplace, to change. They give us different clothes, that they're going to-- thought they're going to ship us. They have the central heating system. There were pipes.

And I go over to a pipe, and I burn myself. And the whole skin comes off of my breast.

Why did you do that?

I don't know. Just by pushing. It was very, very hot, and I just touched it. And I said, that's going to be my end, because it was-- the whole, like, everything came off.

I don't remember who took me someplace, because I probably, like, passed out, because I was scared. They gave me medicine, and this and it healed. That was a good heal. And it healed.

This was in Auschwitz? In Auschwitz. That was towards the end. I said, why did this have to happen to me? I don't know what the reason was, but they took us there.

But the pipes, they had heating. But the water came down, or the pipes were very, very hot. It must have been, because when I-- I just touched it, and just said, this is going to be probably my end, again.

But thank God, everything, with the thing that they put on, I don't even remember where I went, because I was scared. I didn't want to go no place because I was afraid they're going to take me away. But they put the stuff on, and I changed with gauze, and it healed.

This was already maybe November-- December. The reason I know that it was December, it was like Christmas, because I heard one guard said Weihnacht. And I know Weihnacht means-- it means Christmas. They came into the blocks, and they said, again, out.

So I had another girl. She came from my city. She's in Israel, I think, now. She said, why don't you stay behind? Let's not go. I says, no, I'm going.

Somehow I wanted to go. Where they shipped me, I figured, I did so well till now, maybe this is going to do something for me too. And they shipped us on trains, pushed us in.

Then you could hear bombs, OK, because during the day, really, that we didn't travel very little. Just at night. Because

during the day, they bombed. I don't know. The trains didn't go. It took us days. And they brought us into Bergen-Belsen.

Where is Bergen-Belsen?

That's Germany. I mean, that's real-- not a border. That's Germany. Bergen. I don't know. I think that part of Germany is occupied by the Russians. It's the east side.

Did you know at that point that Germany was losing the war?

Yeah, then, by then, we probably knew, because we heard bombs. And we knew they were scared. That's why they shipped us out. Because somebody-- you could hear-- like the men maybe knew more-- something, talking that the Russians are very close.

And they shipped us into Bergen-Belsen. That was, I think, the end of December. And here we come in. We come--

When you ship-- were shipped-- are you shipped with men?

No.

It was all women in there?

Women. Most of them, we were all women. I mean, from the camps, all women. When we shipped out from the cities, we were together. But then they just separated--

These were in closed cars again?

In closed cars, bad.

Did people die during these transports?

Probably.

And we come to the train station. Who do we see? The Lagerführer from Birkenau is there. He took us off. It was a bad-- I forgot. His name was Kramer. It wasn't Hoessler.

And then, one of the kapos that was in Birkenau, I recognized her. She was with him. And they brought us to blocks there. And they put us in.

And then, at night, we looked to different blocks. And there were other girls. I found my friends, one of-- Mrs. Mura, I found one is in New York. They were there.

And she says to me, why did you come here? I said, what do you mean why I came here? Why did you come here? She thought maybe I should have gone someplace else. I says, no, I'm here.

There was another punishment. By then--

Another what?

Punishment. It was bad, because they couldn't bring you in no food, because they were enclosed already. This must have been January and February. The war was really going on that-- by then, as it looks now, they were losing.

So you spent your days inside the barracks?

Inside. Then, in the summer time, we went out.

You didn't work during the day?

I really don't remember what we did there. There where we just kept just for Appell. If we did something bad, we had nothing to eat. They punished us.

Were they killing Jews at the time?

Hurting them. I mean, this. But burning them, no.

Was there a crematorium in Bergen-Belsen?

No, not that I know. No. And there where we just--

The men and women were separate there too?

Separate, yeah. But we knew that there was another place, maybe across with wires that there were men from the out, outside. They used to bring us outside walking. I don't even remember what we did in Bergen-Belsen, but it was very, very bad because we had nothing to eat there. They used-- it was really that they gave you very, very just water. And it was-- and there was a lot of international people there too in one block. They were from different countries and different-- I don't know if they were Jews, but there was a lot of different people.

--terrible. We know that--

This was in January and February.

No, this was in February, February and March. And at night, you could see the red skies, because they were probably very, very close. And by then, we had nothing to eat. We used to go out and work--

You stayed inside all day.

We were outside too, probably. We went out, went in different blocks. But if we worked there-- because they had no place to take us because they couldn't get out either, because the lines, like the British and the Americans, whoever was fighting around at that particular part of Europe.

And every day used to get worse. And people, we were dying there, just like-- every time you turned around, there was somebody dead. You stepped on dead-- actually dead people. We slept with dead people because we had-- there we had nothing to eat already.

Anything to drink?

I don't-- it was like the end is coming. Everybody looked like this. [SIGHS] And eventually we were liberated.

But it-- so one day we go out. We see like-- everything, it looked like they're deserted. Said, it couldn't be deserted. And you hear shots, like echoes from far away.

And then I go out. And I look from far away. And I run back. And I said, you know something? I see, like, a white sheet or something hanging. So my girlfriend, one of them says, this looks like they-- if somebody surrenders. And we don't see. They running, the Germans. And they-- I didn't think that they knew what they were doing already. Maybe they wanted to be good, show that they--

All of a sudden, we hear trucks coming in. And we look out, and we see the British, Canadians. I think everybody that had a little thing probably died. That time, so many people died. It was bad.

When they were liberated, they died from--

Yeah, right, yeah. I ran after the truck, and I wanted to throw something. I didn't know what it was, what I was doing. And--

You wanted to throw something, like a piece of flower or something, a little grass to see, I, like grabbing--

Show your appreciation.

Yeah. We didn't know. And they stopped and there was a chaplain. They were Canadians, I think. They came out, and they grabbed us-- not too many, because everybody fell down on the floor.

Who fell down? The--

Us, (SOBBING) because we couldn't believe it. Something happened, and we want to be free. And then we stood. We looked around and saw what happened to us. They found 100,000 corpse in Bergen-Belsen.

They found 100,000 corpse?

Yeah, because you couldn't burn them there. So everybody, whoever died, they just piled them up. And--

So you were liberated by Canadians?

I think British, Canadians. I don't know. The British and the Canadian.

What was their reaction when they saw you?

I don't know. But like, I think the chaplain touched me. He said, don't worry.

Don't worry.

(SOBBING) Everything is going to be good. And they went in the blocks. Most of the people were dead.

When they went into the blocks, most of the people were dead.

Yeah, most of them, the people in there. Right away, they started to bring in food, because the Germans had food for us. But we found out it was poisoned bread. If they would have give us, everybody would die.

How come they didn't give it to you?

I don't know. They didn't have a chance, I think, because this happened already right away.

So you think they wanted to really, at that point, to destroy whatever evidence--

To destroy, yeah, yeah. But they didn't have a chance. They didn't feed us. Because I think some of them ran away at night. They knew already that they were very close. Because when we walked out in the morning, I said, something happened. It was quiet. You could see or hear just echoes.

And then, when I saw that little thing, I didn't even know what it meant. But then elderly people--

When you saw the white flag.

The white flag. And then it didn't take half an hour. And you could see tanks coming. They weren't Jeeps. They were

tanks. And this was, I think-- I don't remember what. It was April 15, '45.

And I think I got sick right away, because they brought in food. They brought in bread right away. Because we had nothing. And they brought in whatever they had-- probably condensed milk and things. And I started drinking that milk. And I had the diarrhea. And I said, gee, I didn't [CROSS TALK]--

You had diarrhea.

For two weeks I couldn't eat. Couldn't touch. But I had so many breads. I wouldn't let it go. I slept on breads maybe or [LAUGHS].

You slept on bread?

Like cushions. I said, gee. Because we used to-- I used to say to myself, before I die, I want to have a piece of bread that I can cut and say, I have a little piece more later.

But you had enough to eat.

I had enough, but I couldn't eat, because I was very, very sick, diarrhea. But I got better.

A lot of people died.

Ah, a lot. But like I say, I was young. I was 16 years old.

Did they realize that they-- I guess I'm confused as to why they would feed them food that would just make them so sick.

No, no, they-- I mean--

Wasn't it the--

It was war. They tried to bring in whatever they had. Clothes.

They weren't aware that the people were so malnourished. Malnourished. So whatever-- they probably figured we're going to put it in in coffee or whatever. I don't know what they thought. But if it tasted so good, I drank it. And your stomach had nothing. And that make-- but I make--

You drank the condensed milk.

Condensed milk. This I'll never forget. And that's what made me sick. And I was sick for maybe two weeks. But I wasn't deadly sick. I mean, I didn't have to go to a hospital. I started to get-- I said, look, I'm so far away. And I as long I had my bread as a cushion--

So you stayed in the camps.

Then they took us out right from these places. We're broken with lice, with typhuses, with-- they, I mean, the floor sank in. You couldn't even walk. Right away, they took us into different places. They took us in. It was like a paradise. I think the German officers used to live there. They gave us different clothes in different room. We stayed different.

And then, from there, they started working on us. They had, right away, set up a hospital, I think, because all the sick people, there were so many sick people. And then it took so long to take away the corpse from there.

That part of camp we didn't see already. When they took us out, they brought us also in Bergen-Belsen. But it was a different pile. It was like a resort place. All these big, huge homes that officers or soldiers lived. That's where we stayed

for a while. And from there, oh, I mean, the UNRRA.

UNRRA?

Yeah, that was like a place, for this place. They used to--

Displaced person?

Person, something. That's how we knew it. And they wrote down your names, and where you came from, and they put it in papers that you could find somebody. And we stayed there for a while.

This is in Bergen-Belsen.

Bergen-Belsen. We stayed from April, I think. I was there till the fall.

And then everybody went different-- we were in blocks. But we were with girls. We lived together. And they used to bring us, to give us to eat.

And from there, we were separated. I mean we-- I wanted to go to the American zone, I knew. So we tried to go over there. And that's how-- from there we went there. I came here.

When you were in the camps--

Yeah.

--were there ever any attempts at resistance on a--

No, not in the camps. You didn't even dare. Whatever they did to you, you just took it, and just turned around. If you survived that, you were right. If you were dead.

Did religious life continue at all?

No, we didn't no nothing. I didn't even know when it was a holiday or what was going on. No, they [? see them. ?]

Did you, after you worked during the day in the fields or wherever you worked, you came back at night, did you talk with people?

I mean, the girls, yeah, first, when we came back, we had to stay maybe outside maybe an hour and a half till they made sure that everybody that went out came in. God forbid they overcounted one. You stayed for hours till they made sure that everybody came back.

So sometimes they used to take half an hour and sometimes they used to take hours. And then they gave you the little soup with a piece of bread.

So then we used to walk around the camps, go to different. If I knew I had a friend in a different block, we went in a different block.

So you were free to go to different blocks.

Yeah, just in the blocks. And what did you talk about?

About eating, about food, how hard we work, what's going to happen to-- really, what's going to happen. I don't think we ever discussed what's going to happen to us. Because we knew, if you'll be strong, you'll live longer. If you'll be weak, you'll just go before.

Did you have any understanding of what the Germans were trying to do?

We knew that they hated Jews, and they tried to kill us. That's all. And just the Jews. This we knew. This we knew. I mean, we saw it. Didn't have to-- nobody had to tell us.

When you were liberated, you spent a few weeks after that in Bergen-Belsen.

I was in Bergen-Belsen from April till maybe November.

So you were there six months.

Six months, yeah.

What were you feeling then? I mean--

We knew we were alone. We have nobody.

Did you know at that point that everyone--

Oh, yes.

Were you sure that your sisters in Warsaw had died?

We figured if somebody is going to be alive, and our names are going to be all over the world and papers, if somebody is going to be there, my cousin, they just passed away in Israel, he was in Russia, and then he came back, and he saw my name, and he came to see me. Then he went to Israel. So we knew after a while, if somebody is going to--

But I knew that my parents went to Treblinka, and they said nobody survived from there. So I knew they were gone.

Did you have any desire to go-- want to go back to your village?

My friends did. I didn't. I really didn't want to go back. I didn't want to go back. They went. My friend, Mrs. Mura, she went. We lived together, but she went.

To what for?

I don't know. She figured maybe she'll find somebody.

And you?

I don't know. I just didn't want to go.

You were how old when the war ended?

16.

And you were suffering from-- you got sick. I did, just from probably-- look, we didn't eat for days. If we had stayed there another few days, everybody would die, because we had nothing. They couldn't--

You were starving.

Just plain starving.



And how long were you sick? A few weeks, till the day we went away. And then I was OK.

So when you were in Bergen-Belsen, was that in a displacement camp, a DP camp there?

That's probably what they called it. It was a camp. We were in Block 7, L7. I mean, I know it was blocks.

How did you feel about being in a block camp?

It was a room. We felt good. We were with six girls. We weren't alone. Nobody had nobody-- just each other.

What did you do during the day.

We used to go out, meet other ones, try to-- like, then the boys used to come. So they used to come and take us, if they had grabbed a car from Germans or something, take us, that they knew there were factories to get some clothing for us. We had nothing.

So somebody-- like, we had from blankets. There was a girl that she could sew. She made skirts for us. From a sheet she made a blouse, something. We had nothing.

These camps were run by British?

We were liberated by the British, really, so they were run by British.

Did they ask you anything about you? Did they ever talk to you about--

No, they-- the soldiers weren't. I mean, the soldiers, that they liberated us, they knew. I mean, they came and they walked in the camps. These were probably high ranks. But the individual plain soldier--

You couldn't communicate with them anyway.

No, we couldn't speak English. Sometimes if they had candy or something, they wanted to give us. Or whoever smoked cigarettes or something. But I mean, somebody to come and to talk. What happened is no. They knew what happened.

So you didn't really search for family members.

I knew that they-- this they told me right away, when they took the-- that my parents went to Treblinka. Nobody survived there. And that's where they went. So I had no, really, feeling that somebody is going to be living.

How about your two sisters in Warsaw?

And she was in the Warsaw ghetto. No, I had just one sister, and my other sister lived with us, my other sister. She was in the Warsaw Ghetto. She just--

You never heard from her.

Never heard from her. The only one that I heard was my brother-in-law. No. And I really, no--

I have a cousin that lives in Sweden, that he survived too. He was in the Russian army, in different armies, in the Polish army. Came to see me two years ago. And I didn't even remember him too much because he went away. He came, when the war broke out, he grabbed a bike and he ran. And I was 12 years old. And so many years passed, really.

But he survived, and he lived in Poland for a while. And then he could see in Poland wasn't good. So try and-- he was living in Sweden. And that's really-- and I have a few cousins in Israel.

That's the only relatives that I have. From my mother's side, I have nobody. Nobody. All the relatives I have is my father's.

You were in Bergen-Belsen for six months after you were liberated.

Yeah. Must have been, because we were liberated in April, and I didn't go to Frankfurt till the fall.

Frankfurt. You went to Frankfurt, Germany?

Germany. Frankfurt am Main.

During that six months, I imagine you were thinking about what you were going to do with your life now.

I don't really know. Nothing came up. We thought that's living. You used to a pattern. You didn't even know that you have to have a house, that you need--

You were so used to being told what to do, that you--

To do, and somebody giving you something to eat, that we didn't know that you need money, that you need to work, that you need homes. That was the pattern.

So what happened in November that caused you to leave Bergen-Belsen?

Well, my friends, some of them went there, and they said, would you like-- I'll make some hotter coffee.

No, this is fine.

And I--

Some--

And they-- a few of my friends went there. And they said it's better there. It's more like not a camp. It's more a city living, and this. So I tried to go there.

So she went first. She had a boyfriend by then already. She met somebody. And I said, mm, I'll go too. What's the difference where I'm living? I'll go there.

So then I couldn't go there because they wanted-- it was also like a displaced camp for displaced persons. So they told me, if I'm going to say if I'm her sister, I can go. So I said, I'm her sister, and I gave her name. And then I felt terrible that I--

Why couldn't you go there?

I don't know. They said they couldn't take in any more people.

Who was it run by?

Americans already. See, that part of Germany was occupied by the Americans.

By the Americans? That was the American zone?

Yeah, must have been.

So there was a Russian zone.

Yeah, the Russians, I don't know who was there.

There was an American zone. There was a British zone.

British zone.

To go from one zone to the next, did you need a passport of any kind? How did you get to the American zone?

Oh, don't ask. I don't know. Somebody made some paper up from a bicycle or something. The boys did-- they were already a little-- they knew-- they were older-- that you have to do something.

Do you feel uncomfortable talking about it?

No, no, no. And they packed us into the train, and I came there, and I stayed there. And from there--

So you somehow got smuggled into the American zone?

Not smuggled in, really. Just it wasn't that hard. Maybe it was, especially, I think, made for the Germans, not so much for the displaced persons.

I see.

Could be. But I mean, I had no trouble.

You had to get false papers?

I didn't have the papers. I don't know what I showed them. Somebody gave me a paper and said my name, and I went they looked over, because you had to change trains because they had a stop in this part, and go out, and then go to another train to the other place.

Who was running Germany then?

I don't know who was running Germany. I think the Americans were, and the British. I really don't know. They didn't have then a government yet, did they? I don't know.

I was never really that interested. I mean, we didn't care. As long as we knew that we are free, that nobody stays with a gun, and that we not afraid.

Do you remember what your mental, emotional--

I used to cry. Yeah, I used to cry.

You cried all the time.

I used to cry. And when we're just talking about things, I mean, the tears used to just come.

I imagine you had to keep in a lot. We did.

So that when the war finally ended, you were finally able to cry And not get punished for it.

For it. Even now, anything, something that's sad on television, something, I just-- the tears just come. I think we have so much tears that I don't know where it's coming from, because the crying that we did in our life--

So you spent most of your days, let's say, during that six months at Bergen-Belsen.

I mean, we're talking. We were free. We knew that we can go out. And I mean there was nothing particular that you can do. I mean, there were-- we just, I think we were "bilitating" or something.

Rehabilitating.

"Bilitating," yeah. Because some of us looked really bad. Bad. And then--

Did people talk about their experiences with each other?

The girl that I was with, we had the same experience. We didn't have to talk about it. We went through the same thing because we were girls, that we survived. We were in the same concentration camps. And somehow we survived together. And then, when they assigned some rooms, we said we want to be together. And that's how we stayed six together.

OK, so then you went to Frankfurt.

Yeah.

And you were in a DP camp there. It must have been something, because they took away homes from the Germans, and they gave us, it was more private homes.

So why don't you tell me what happened once you got to Frankfurt?

They-- I lived in a house that I think-- I don't know who push-- told the Germans to go out from that part of Zeilsheim. And we used to get-- I mean, the food used to come from the-- we had to go to the place, from the displaced-- I don't know what you call that. But we got our supplies from there. And we just lived.

Some of them tried to go away from there, go to America, go to Israel. We knew that eventually we're not going to stay there.

How long were you in Frankfurt? I must have been there seven months or more. I came there in November, and I left there-- I came to America in September the following year. But I knew already for a long time that I was going to go.

You made a decision to go to America.

I don't know. They said we can register. I mean, it wasn't any decision to make. They said there was a registration going on if somebody wants to register to go to America.

So I went. My friends went, and I went. But they pulled me out from the first one because I was a teenager.

Who pulled you out?

I mean, probably those people that interviewed you. They pulled names, that they figured she's young. Maybe she can go to school or something. So they separated everybody. They took-- they looked over the list.

People register. Let's say I come to a place and I register. I'm so old and-- that's all. And then somebody else comes and somebody else comes. Hundreds of people register. But those that registered with me didn't go. I was the only one that went.

To America.

To America. Then.

You think being young, that was in your favor?

Yes, they told us. They told me. Because before I reach a certain age. So I was considered a teenager.

But then they came later, two years later, three years later. But they came too.

Why did you decide to go to the States? You could have gone to Israel. You could have gone anywhere.

I don't know. I really just don't know.

So you came to the States in September of--

'46.

And what did you do when you first came to the United States?

Well, when I came here, my husband had relatives here. And he knew he was going to go here. He had affidavits.

Wait, you weren't married at the time.

No, no. But I knew him. He wanted me to come here.

You had a boyfriend then?

I don't know. He's just a friend. But he said, he's going there. I should go too.

Your husband was also.

Yeah, but he had relatives here. He had a lot of relatives.

So he was living in Frankfurt.

In Frankfurt.

You met him in Frankfurt?

Yeah, yeah. I think I met him in Bergen-Belsen. Then we all came to Frankfurt. I really don't remember how. And he says, why don't you go to America too? Said, I'm going to write my uncle. He's going to send you affidavit so you can come with me. His uncle didn't hear. But he had affidavit for him.

Your--

My husband had it.

At the time--

At the time, yeah.

And he had an affidavit because he was liberated by Americans? Yes. And his uncle knew that he survived, and he send him papers to come. But it took them a long time to come here. And--

He came after you?

Yes, a lot longer. And then he said [INAUDIBLE]. And that's how I came, I think.

Did you have any plans to marry him at the time?

Yeah, we figured someday. Anybody that was close to us was considered a very good friend because we had nobody, no relatives. I don't think there was any uncles or sisters, very few that sisters or brothers survived that were together. So anybody that was close that you knew that you survived, you called them-- you were a relative. I mean, whatever they did. I didn't want to go to America. I wanted to stay with the girls.

You didn't want to go to America. I see.

I didn't want to go no place. I wanted to stay with them.

You just wanted to be with people who you cared about.

Cared about and that I knew, because I knew I have nobody.

So you came here in September of '48-- I mean, sorry, September '46.

'46.

And what did you do when you got here?

Oh, my husband's uncle took me. He came for me. He really wasn't-- I mean, I didn't come to him, but he found out that I came. So he took me. He took me to his house.

And then he had a factory. I started working, which now that I think was the wrong thing. And I worked. Then my husband came.

Why was it the wrong thing?

Because I could have go to school if he wouldn't take me. See, I could have go to the organization, to the Jewish--

If he hadn't have taken you, the organization would have--

Yeah, they had me, because they used to check on me to see if I'm all right. And then--

What kind of factory did you work in?

Clothing. Didn't know nothing about--

Where was this at? In New York?

No, Boston. I came by to Boston. I came to New York. I arrived to New York, but I-- and then he came to pick me up with a picture that my husband sent him to recognize me. And he brought me here. And since then I've been--

How much later did your husband come, or did your husband-- [? Sidney? ?]

Yeah, 15 months.

15. A year and a half later. And you got married soon afterwards?

Yeah.

When you came here, did you have any contact with other survivors?

No. Did his uncle-- what was his uncle's name?

Wolrich.

What kind of relationship did you have with that family? I mean--

To me, they were very-- look, they were nothing to me, really, strangers. But they were nice. It was very hard. You couldn't speak the language. But then I started going to high school-- I mean, to school at night. That's when I met some survivors. And that's when already it started, our difference.

I met a boy that he knew that he knows a girl that has the same number as me. She came in May. And I called her. And she was the girl that lives in Florida, that we were together. So I had some place to go already all the weekends.

It was a little easier because the beginning, I only wished they would take me and ship me back to Germany to stay with my friends, because I--

When you came here you were very homesick then.

Terrible. For them, for the girls that I stayed with.

Did you cry a lot when you came here to the States?

Terrible. The nights, my pillows used to be wet every morning.

So you were extremely depressed.

Very, very, very, very. You can't speak. You have nobody. You don't see nobody. But you survive it.

But then, finally, when I started going to night school, that's when I met a lot of people, and that's when I felt a little bit better.

Did they ever ask-- were you able to talk with his uncle at all?

Yeah, they wanted to. Everybody knew what happened. I mean, nobody wanted to hurt you, to talk about it, really, because once they started talking about it I started crying, and they felt bad.

Maybe it was hard for them to hear.

To hear too.

Was his uncle religious?

Not really.

Did you have any kind of religion after the war?

I knew I was--

What were your feelings about God?

Oh, I always talk to God. I felt maybe sometimes he didn't listen what happened to us, but I always felt that maybe they just wanted-- because they used to say, I remember, they say, there's always going to be one left or somebody, one Jew

is. Somebody going to survive. And they used to say from each family, maybe one is going to survive, and I figured maybe I was the chosen one, that I survived.

I don't know. I believe. I do. I don't know why it happened to us, what it did. Maybe just overlooked us or something.

But when you always say, you say God help me. And I think he tries. I don't know.

So you didn't really talk about your experiences.

No, not too much. Not really. I mean, everybody knew, and everybody started-- we used to start talking, and we used to cry, and this, and--

With other survivors.

With the other survivors. We, like I say, we always talk about it. It's always hard. We can go to any party, to anything. We always come out. We finish up, what happened to us. Always a camp or always something. So we never forget it.

How were you treated by other people in the States, by non-Jews, by Jews?

Oh, they were very-- first of all, there wasn't too many in Dorchester. I was, I think, the only one. So I was like something. Oh, she survived. How did you survive?

And like some people had-- I didn't like the way sometimes they said something. Like I looked really-- look I was young. And I started eating then. So I looked good, and I was kind of chubby.

He says, how come you survived, or something-- things like this. How come the others.

As though you did something wrong to survive?

I don't know what it meant.

They made you feel guilty?

How did you get out? Something like this.

Implying what did you do?

Yeah, and they figured, how come you look so good, or something, that I said, I'm out already a year and a half, and I'm eating. So I tried to look-- I didn't look like this. You had to explain.

Why you look so good.

Because they expected you to look like something that you have dead already.

Like a skeleton.

Skeleton. So I really didn't like to explain and choked, and because I could see that some of them didn't understand nothing, and they didn't know what was going on.

Did you apply for reparations?

What's that?

That Germany to pay you money--



Yes, yeah, yeah.

--for having been in camps. Are you continuing to get reparations?

When your husband came-- well, at that time your boyfriend, let's say. He came in '47 or '48.

The end of '47.

And then you got married. And you lived in--

Dorchester.

--in Dorchester. Did you have children soon afterwards?

Marlene was born--

How many children do you have?

I just have--

You have Marlene.

Marlene. And about a year and a half later.

So she was born in '50?

No, '49.

What was your feeling about having children?

I think, the feelings, I don't know. Sometimes, you get in a point you don't know what you feel. You feel different. Sometimes you feel you want a lot of children. Then you-- I don't know. Things happen to you that--

We had a hard time here. My husband was sick when we came, stomach trouble and this. And we really struggled. Lived in one room on Norfolk Street.

What does your husband do?

He's a cutter, but he doesn't work already for five years.

He's a cutter?

He was a cutter.

You mean like for patterns and material?

Patterns, yeah, yeah. And then, as soon as we moved here, he had a heart attack a year later.

He recently had a heart attack. How old is he?

He's now 55.

And how old are you now?

53. No, he's older. He's going to be-- he's 56, going to be 57. And I'm 53.

What languages did you speak when--

When I came here? Polish.

And how about--

Jewish. Most of them, I mean--

Yiddish.

Oh, yeah, Yiddish, yeah. This we spoke. That's all we knew. Yeah.

Does Marlene know Yiddish?

Yeah. She can, when she needs it, she speaks it good. But she-- I still talk to her in Yiddish.

Do you think--

I want to thank you for allowing me to interview you today, and I just wanted to end this interview by asking you if you think another Holocaust is possible.

I hope not, and I don't think-- no. We have Israel.

So you don't think it will ever happen.

Couldn't.