

OK. Mrs. Rettman, we were discussing your trip to the Greenberg camp. At the station, you observed your husband being struck by a German guard. Was that the last time you saw your husband during the Holocaust?

No. When we arrived to Greenberg, my husband went to a different barrack and I went to a different barrack. And then the following day, I was assigned to a factory, and I was working in a textile factory. And I was working on Weberei on two machines.

What are they?

Weberei.

That's the name of the machines you were working on?

Yeah, where we were making materials. And my husband was working as a locksmith.

Ah.

Yeah.

How did you come to find out he was working as a locksmith?

In the factory.

So you learned at that time that he was working as a locksmith?

Yeah. Yeah.

Did you hear it from other people in the camp or did you have actual communication with your husband?

No, we didn't have any communication, except sometime in the eye. He passed through with his toolbox and he waved to me. That's the only time I was a chance to see him.

Now these barracks that you were staying at, would you describe those for us?

They were big, big barracks. We were like 60 to 80 girls on one barrack. And I was with my sisters. I was sleeping on the lower bunk bed, my older sister. My younger sister was on top with somebody else.

You had to share a bed with one of your sisters?

Yeah, bunk beds.

You had to share-- they were double bunks, up and down?

Yes.

And there were two people sleeping on each level?

Yes.

So that you were actually sharing your mattress with one of your sisters?

It was a straw sack.

Pardon me?

A straw sack, not a mattress.

Oh, a straw sack?

Yes.

Was it filled with anything?

With straw.

Oh, it was filled with straw?

Yeah.

And you had no pillows?

No.

What about bedding or covers?

One blanket.

Each one of you had a blanket?

One blanket.

Yes.

When were you issued your straw sack and your blanket?

When we came in to the barrack. The sign, this is your bunk. And we got that time, the only thing we got, the blanket and the clothes what we were wearing. Then when this became a concentration camp, we had to change our clothes to a striped dress.

So that when you arrived at the Greenberg camp, you continued wearing the same clothing that you left with? Is that correct?

Yes, just for a short time, until they gave us the code, the pasiak.

What's that?

This was a dress, gray with light blue stripes.

That was later on after you had arrived there?

Yeah.

Did you have any other clothing to wear? Did they give you underclothes?

We had underclothes, yes. Panties. No bra. Just the panties and the dress and the wooden shoe.

Wooden shoes?

Yes.

What kind of wooden shoes were they, like Dutch shoes?

No. It was open in the back and closed in the front with a piece of cloth.

Were you ever able to wash your clothing?

Yeah. Yeah. Once a week we were allowed to go. We used to go downstairs to the washroom and wash. Or sometimes they used to give us, once in a while, a clean dress.

Were there toilet facilities in the barracks?

It was one big toilet, like a piece of wood with holes.

With holes in it?

Yeah.

A latrine?

Yeah.

How many hours a day did you work?

We went to work like, for instance, 6 o'clock in the morning. They used to make the alarm in 4 o'clock. We should have enough time to make the bunks very nice and smooth. And we got dressed, and we passed around some black coffee and a slice of black bread, and we went to work. 6 o'clock on the dot we start to work.

So they woke you up at 4:00 in the morning?

Mm-hmm, because we used to stay on the Appellplatz, which means in the courtyard. Sometimes for two, three hours, till we start to march by SS ladies to the factory. It wasn't too far to walk to the factory.

Where did they feed you, if you could call that feeding?

The morning before we went to work we, got a slice of black bread and a black coffee.

At your bunk or in another room?

No, in the room. Yeah. And then when we came back, after 12, 14 hours of work-- because we had to make production. They used to call lights. Like for instance, like here, production. We had to make so much and so much, otherwise you were not released to go back to the camp.

And we were working sometimes 12 hours, 14 hours a day. When we came back from the factory, we lined up by the kitchen, a big line. And we was waiting for our soup, our dinner time. The dinner was only consist of a bowl of soup. Sometimes was potatoes, sometimes spinach, but most of the time was plain water.

Hot water, cold water?

Warm.

Warm water?

Yeah.

Plain water with nothing in it?

You were lucky when you found a piece of potato or some pieces of vegetables.

And that was all were given for dinner?

That's all what we used to get for dinner.

What happened when people got sick?

They send us to a Revier.

What?

They use, like here, Krankenstube. Krankenstube means, like here, in a hospital. But in camp was, at that time, one doctor and one nurse. The doctor was a woman.

Were they Jewish?

No.

So they were Germans or--

No Germans. She was a Russian lady, a doctor. Yeah. She was also a Haefling.

But they were prisoners?

Yes, also prisoners.

So besides Jewish prisoners, there were non-Jewish prisoners?

No. In our camp was only Jewish people. She was the only one non-Jew because she was a doctor.

And what kind of treatment did they give people when they became ill?

Nothing. Just we were laying. The only privilege, the sick people used to have maybe sometime a little bit more black coffee or maybe a little bit extra soup. This was the only privilege. No medication, nothing.

Do you know if anybody died?

Many of them.

What became of the people who died? What became of their remains?

They took them out from the Krankenstube. What happened to them, we don't know.

Did you see or know of-- were there any crematorium?

No, not in our camp. No.

Did you become ill at any time?

I was, a matter of fact, very ill.

When was this?

This was in 1940-- end of '43. End of '43. I came back from the factory and I got very, very high temperature. And we didn't know what happened to me. All of a sudden, I got swollen. My legs got very swollen.

In the Krankenstube, you were only allowed one week, the most one week. You were lucky if you were one week in the Krankenstube.

What happened after a week?

You had to go to the factory working.

So they would leave you there for a week and then--

That's right.

--you had to go back to work?

But I didn't have a chance to go back to work because in January 1945, our camp was evacuated. A year before-- it was a few months before, maybe six, eight months before, they took out all the men's camp and they send it away.

And what?

They send away my husband to a different camp.

So sometime-- just to clarify matters, you're still in 1944?

Yeah.

When they cleared the men out of the Greenberg camp?

Yeah.

When were you sick? Was that prior to the men leaving or after the men?

After the men left, yeah.

And at that time, that was the last you saw your husband?

Saw my husband.

And then sometime after that, in late 1944, is when you became ill?

Yeah, I was very ill.

And you were sent to the hospital?

Yeah, if you call this hospital.

I was going to say the so-called hospital.

Yeah.

OK. And who was it-- did anybody take care of you while you were in the barracks, before you were sent to the hospital?

Before I got sick?

Were you still with your sister?

Yeah, my sister-- when they came home from work, they used to come in and see me and talk to me. And sometimes they were able to have extra soup to bring in, I should have a little bit more soup. And this was the extent of my food.

And then you went to the hospital, again, the so-called hospital. Were you treated by the doctor there?

The treatment was only she used to come in and maybe gave me, once in a while, an aspirin. I don't know what kind of pill it was. But this was not the right medication, what I really needed, because nobody knew what's wrong with me.

Did you ever find out what was wrong with you?

Yes. I had like, they used to call in German, [GERMAN]. Like here, pneumonia. Yeah.

And do you recall the name of the doctor that--

No.

You don't know. How long were you there?

I was there maybe for two or three weeks.

Why didn't you get sent back to work after a week?

I went out every morning to the Appell, when they were counting the people to send to the factory. But after the count, I went back to the hospital.

Was this surreptitiously, or you snuck back in the hospital?

Exactly.

So that the Germans didn't know you were--

Exactly.

Was anybody helping you to maintain this?

Yes.

Who was helping you?

Even the doctor, the Russian doctor, she helped me.

She was helping you get back into the hospital so that you didn't have to spend 14 hours a day--

Once in a while used to come an SS man. He was a [GERMAN]. Like here, like a nurse. But he was not a nurse. He used to wear a German uniform with that hat on top of his head. And when the doctor knew he's coming to check the

people, she used to sneak me out from the hospital.

Do you know what his name was?

No.

You never found out. So what happened after you were in the hospital for two or three weeks?

After that, the camp had to evacuate.

Now, when you're saying the camp, by this time there were only women in the camp.

Only women, yeah.

Were there any children in the camp?

No. No.

What became of the children? What happened to the children?

We didn't have any children in the camp.

No children were brought?

No children. No.

What about--

There were a few girls there, maybe 14, 15 years old. This was the youngest one. But very small children, no.

How old were the oldest people at the camp?

Maybe 35, 40 maybe the most.

So after two or three weeks, then you were taken from the camp?

The rumors were the camp would be evacuated. So my sisters were afraid if the camp has to be evacuated, they will would everybody from that hospital to Auschwitz, because we were evacuated by foot. So one evening, the doctor came. And he said, Sally, you'd better get dressed and get out, back to your bunker, which I did. The following morning we were evacuated.

How did the doctor know that the camp was being evacuated? Do you know how she knew?

Evidently, she knew from the Lagerführer. The Lagerführer was the lady-- we had ladies, SS ladies. She found out from them, how we should prepare ourselves because tomorrow, the camp, we have to march.

So being that although the doctor was a prisoner also--

That's right.

--being that she wasn't Jewish, she was able to get information or speak to the Germans in a way that you could not.

The head of the camp was a Judenälteste, which she was Jewish, also a prisoner, and she was able to talk to the German.

But was this person appointed by the Germans?

Yes. She was picked up by the Germans.

They picked somebody out of the prison population, the camp population, to be the spokesman for the camp? Do you know who that was?

She is right now in Australia.

Do you know that she's still living in Australia?

Yeah.

What was your feelings about her or people in her position?

She was very helpful in some directions because she was always protecting us as much as possible. Yeah.

Did she go with you when you left the camp?

Yes. She was just the same prisoner like we all.

So she wasn't given any kind of special treatment in the way of food?

No. No.

Then when you left the camp, you had to leave on foot?

On foot, yeah.

And where did you go?

Our destination was supposed to be Oranienburg.

Where is that?

This is 60, 60 or 70 miles-- that's what I was told-- before Berlin. And we were in Greenberg, which was very far away. We were marching and marching for days and months.

On foot?

On foot. All on foot. We were 1,500 girls. And we were marching around the circle. Why around a circle? Because wherever we went, the Russians were already close and they didn't want we should get liberated. So they were marching us and walking around the circle, and we didn't know actually where we go.

What do you mean? I don't understand what you mean by marching in a circle?

Well, let's say we went in to Breslau. Not Breslau. What was the city? I forgot the name of it.

Dresden. Exactly. Then at that time, Dresden was bombed and all Dresden was in one big fire. So we had to go back. And that time--

You went back to Greenberg?

No. We went back to another camp. This was Helmbrechts. This was also a concentration camp, but a very, very bad



concentration camp. And in Helmbrechts were only people-- the police was there. Like not as much German. Like there were Ukraine.

Ukrainian?

Yes. And the Ukrainian were not so good to us, either. A matter of fact, they were even worse like the Germans.

Was that your first experience with non-German guards?

There were German police there, but in the barracks, there were, most of them, Ukrainian. And if they found out that a Jewish shipment of Jewish people, they were terrible to us. We were there maybe for three days, three days in that camp.

And the barracks were without windows, just open, without glass, without anything. No bed, bunk beds, nothing. We were laying on the floor. And they were pushing us. And in that barrack, we were laying like sardines in a box.

How many of you were there?

Maybe 150 in one little room. We were laying on top of each other.

Were you fed? Did you get anything to eat?

No. The third day, they gave us-- on the courtyard, there was snow up to the knee. And they shoved us out and we were standing there for three, four hours. Who was lucky and pushed into the line, we were lucky we got a bowl of soup. Otherwise, you could be for two or three days without food. The girls were dying like flies.

You brought up something interesting about the weather conditions.

The weather condition was terrible because it was January. When we left Greenberg, it was January. It was very cold.

You had the wooden shoes?

Wooden shoes and the only dress, and that's it.

So you were still in the wooden open shoes and the same dress that they had issued you?

That's right. And a blanket. We were dragging with us a blanket.

And what happened to the women who couldn't make it, who died or fell off?

We left them.

They were just left behind?

They're left behind.

There was no opportunity to bury them or say a prayer?

No. Nothing. Nothing.

Were there religious Jews who were observing any Jewish tradition or able to?

No. Some girls were away from Orthodox homes. They were saying prayers quietly in silence for themselves.

So I take it you were marching away from the Russians?

Yes.

How did you know that the Russians were coming in or moving, I guess that would be, westward. How did you know that they were coming in?

Because the police, the soldiers, were marching with us. We sometimes picked up, here and there, about what they were saying to each other. Yeah. Because otherwise, we didn't know nothing was going on. We didn't have no newspaper. We didn't have no radio, no news, nothing. We know only one thing, one direction we have to walk.

After you left this Ukrainian-run concentration camp, where did you go from there?

We were marching again. And our destination, like I said before, was Oranienburg. Oranienburg was like Auschwitz. They used to call this a [GERMAN] Lager.

A what?

[GERMAN] Lager. That means you went there one night, the following morning you went to the crematory. That's all. This was the end of it.

But luckily, we didn't. 60 miles before Oranienburg we went back, because already they were saying Russia was around surrounding Oranienburg.

When was the first you had heard of crematoria?

We knew about it in Greenberg.

That's the first you heard of it?

Yeah. Because in Greenberg, being in Greenberg, if some girl used to-- she didn't finish her production-- let's say we had to make a production, so much and so much, a certain amount. She didn't finish it, or she did something that she not supposed to, so she was sent to Auschwitz. In that time, we learn Auschwitz is a crematory.

Or a death camp.

Yeah.

So while you were marching, you suspected that you were also going to a death camp?

Yes.

Were you told that by the Germans?

No. No.

Were you given any information by the Germans or the Ukrainians, or whoever it was that was guarding you, watching you?

When we walked out from Helmbrechts, the Ukrainians used to say to us in German, that's the end of you. Every minute, on the minute, we used to hear this, this is the end of you. If I've looked at you, that's the end of you.

When you turned around 60 kilometers, was it, outside of Oranienburg?

Oranienburg.

Oranienburg. Where did you go then?

We went back, and then we--

Did you go back to the Ukrainian--

No, we went to a different camp. We went that time to Zwodau, also a camp. In Zwodau we stay maybe for two or three days, maybe two days. I don't recall exactly. I think it was only two days. And there we didn't do anything. And we stayed only overnight.

And one day, the following day, we marched again. From there-- actually, when we walked from there out, we didn't know the cities. We didn't know the date. We didn't know what month it is.

Was it still cold?

Very cold.

Was there snow on the ground?

Snow and ice. We used to sometimes, at night, when it was already dark, the police-- they used to call the Wachtmeisters in German-- they used to go into farms and they used to take some Scheunes, where they used to have the high and things storage. We used to go in there and stay overnight. Most of the time in the evening, we used to sleep on the open field.

And my experience once was I was laying on an open field with my two sisters, and somebody was pushing me over my head. And I was punching her, she should push away her foot, because it was something hurting me. Meantime, when it starts to get light in the morning, I found out that girl is dead, frozen, frozen to death. And never, when we start in the morning to walk, never the same amount went back to the march, because a lot of the girls were frozen to death.

Did you know the girl that you found frozen to death?

Yes. Yes. She was a Hungarian girl. We were marching together for a long time.

What were your feelings at the time? Did you have any?

We were so stiff, you know, and everybody was fighting for the tomorrow. It was even hard to imagine that this could happen to human beings.

Where did you finally end up on that march?

We wind up and on the border, Czechoslovakia.

Did you know it was the Czechoslovakian border?

We saw signs, and the signs, Czechoslovakia was similar to Polish. So we went into a farm. And at that time, we were very small. We walked out from Greenberg 1,500 girls. By the end, we were left 120 from 1,500.

Were the German guards still watching?

Were killing left and right.

Pardon me?

They were killing us left and right. If somebody was not able to walk, they were on the spot killed.

How were they killed?

Shot with a pistol.

So you actually heard the gunshot?

Of course.

What was done with the bodies after they were shot?

We don't know. They were left.

The guards were still with you, surrounding you, when you reached the Czechoslovakian border?

Border, yeah.

How many guards were there?

There was, I would say, maybe 15, 18. Yeah.

What happened then?

So we were walking on the Czechoslovakian border. When we were already in [NON-ENGLISH], which was not too far from Langesdorf. In Langesdorf, my sister said to me, my older sister-- my younger sister, pardon me-- she said, listen, Sally. I'm going to escape here.

I said, Jenny, if you have a chance to survive, go ahead, because I was not able to go any farther. My legs were very swollen. I was very sick. And I didn't know how I survived so far.

So I said to my sister, oldest one, her name is Gertrude, Jenny already escaped. How about we should escape, too, if it's possible?

We don't have nothing more to lose. You see we will be shot anyhow. You don't want to go away by yourself. I cannot. Why don't you decide it? She said, OK.

So somehow-- it was already like a little bit dark-- my sister and myself, we escaped and we ran over to a cemetery. And we stayed there overnight. But there was no way to stay because there was no trees. It was all covered with snow, and we were afraid they will see us. So we went back to the little town and we went to the police station.

And we said, we lost our transport. We didn't say we're Jewish. We were in a Polish camp. We lost our camp and I would like to go back. They took us back to our camp. At the police station, they said, here is a camp from Jewish ladies. Why don't you go there? We went and we went back to our transport.

So you ended up back with the same group?

The same group.

Were these police that you spoke to, were they Czechoslovakian or German?

German. This was already German, too. Czechoslovakia was, that time, occupied from the German. So we came back to our transport. We found our sister, the younger one, there, too. She came back, too.

Oh, you were separated from the youngest one?

Because she ran away a day before. And she came back. She was afraid. So we were marching again a few days, but this was already by the end. And my sisters and myself and two of our friends, which one is now in Boston and the other one is in Israel, we all decide we are escaping here. We don't have nothing left to lose. The transport is getting smaller, smaller, and smaller. So what, we should wait till somebody will kill us? Let's take a chance. We escaped. How? We went into a Scheune.

What's a Scheuene?

A Scheune is like a barrack where the farmers are keeping starch and food.

A barn?

A barn, exactly. And we stayed there overnight. He was a Czech.

Pardon me?

He was a Czech. He was very nice and kind to us, and he saw the condition we are. He saw we are Jewish because we were wearing the yellow Jewish star, but written Jude. We had on our back written our concentration number.

When did you get those uniforms?

In Greenberg, and since Greenberg we were wearing the same dress.

But earlier when you had escaped the first time, were you wearing that also?

Absolutely. But we were covered with the blanket.

Oh, you had the blanket covering you. OK.

And we stayed in that Scheune for overnight. We stayed there. The farmer brought us hot potatoes and a hot soup, and it was like in heaven.

Did you ever find out his name?

No. And we stayed there maybe three, maybe four hours. Fall asleep, finally. He came in. He said, girls, you have to escape from here because I need that barrack for the soldiers that are coming back from the front line, and I have to prepare. I got a telephone. I have to prepare this for the soldiers.

Oh, they were going to stay in this barn that you were staying in?

So that farmer gave us instructions how to go into Czechoslovakia to Langesdorf. We went to a little river. The water was up to here, which wasn't too bad, but it was winter time. The blanket was heavy because it was wet. And we had to pass a bridge, and on the bridge were Hitlerjugend. And they were screaming at us, Jude, Jude, Jude.

They saw you?

Yeah. We didn't pay any attention. We were walking.

How old were these Hitler youth?

Maybe 14, maybe 15 years old.

They were German?

German. We came to the first house in Langesdorf. We knocked the door. Her name I will never forget. This was Mrs. Schmidt, her name was.

And we told our story. We are from a Polish camp. We lost our camp because the camp was bombed. This was a makeup story. If she would be kind enough to let us stay here overnight. She used to have one room, straight from the street.

But before it was like a little vestibule before you walked in, just a little-- you call this here vestibule, but it was like a shack. She said, the only thing I were allowed you here to stay here, just till it gets a little light. But early in the morning, you have to leave.

So one of our girlfriends, she spoke very fluently German. And she said to her, Frau Schmidt allowed us to stay here. You see we have a sick girl, which that was me . She said, no, I cannot allow you here because my husband is in Dachau.

Is what?

In Dachau concentration camp. And I'm watching very carefully. My husband is not-- he didn't want to belong to the party, and they arrest him.

This was a German woman?

Yes. She was a Czech. She was not German. She was Czech. And they took away from me the two children because they didn't want to say in the school, "Heil Hitler." And I'm watching. I'm afraid because I'm the same position like you are. The only thing, I am not a person of war, but otherwise I'm in the same position. I'm afraid. But she said to us, listen, kids, don't worry. The war is pretty soon over. And go, you will find somebody else who will let you stay another day. So we start to cry and we didn't want to leave there. We knew we're putting her in a bad spot, but we didn't have any choice.

So she went to the landlady in the back of the house and she said, what shall I do? Those girls want to leave and they just came in. What shall I do with them?

So she said, listen, Frau Schmidt, let's take the girls over in the attic. She took us to the stepladder, because it was not an attic to go over from the house, but from the backyard, on a ladder, like on a farmhouse. And she gave us that attic and we stayed there for three weeks.

That Mrs. Schmidt was very nice to us. She risked her life, too. She risked very much. But she was very nice and she was very sympathetic with us. And we stayed there for three weeks. She came over every night and was quietly in there, and brought us every night a little bit soup and sometimes a piece of potato. She was poor by herself.

And every day she used to come over and tell us the news, what's going on. She said, you will see, you will be pretty soon liberated because the Americans are coming closer, closer, and closer. But meantime, we were there, laying quietly. Nobody should hear us. And around one day-- this I will never forget. This was May 12th-- and she came. She said, you will see, tonight you will be liberated.

May 12th of 19--

May 12th, 1945. Pardon me, April 12th. April 12th, 1945. She came over, 11:30, with a broom and a white rag pinned with thumbtacks. She said, when I will give you the signal, you will take this out to the window. It was exactly 12 o'clock, April 12th, when we were liberated by the American troops.

Yeah. What happened then?

Then a few hours later, I don't know how they found out, soldiers came over and saw us, the condition we are laying here. One of my friends, when she passed away--

She passed away there?

Not there. We couldn't commute with them because we didn't speak English. And Mrs. Schmidt came over with them. The soldiers thought she was a German woman and she found Jews and put them in the attic. They were ready to kill her. So we said, wait a minute. You better bring a Dolmetscher and let us know.

And bring a what?

A Dolmetscher. He should understand what we are saying. That woman--

What do you mean by Dolmetscher?

Dolmetscher, a--

A translator?

A translator.

OK.

Yeah. So he came, a soldier, an American soldier. Spoke very nice Polish. Evidently, he is from a Polish family. And we told them that Mrs. Schmidt was one who kept us here, and she was very kind to us and gave us that attic to stay here for three weeks. And around 6 o'clock in the morning came a truck, Red Cross, and took us all to Langesdorf, to a hospital.

And I was there for seven weeks in that hospital. My legs were swollen. I couldn't walk. I was on crutches. And the other girls were located in a house with American to care, and I was in the hospital. My younger sister was in the hospital. The youngest sister was only a few days, and she was OK. My girlfriend died on typhus.

In the hospital?

In the hospital. And I was in the hospital seven weeks. They were very nice to me, very kind. I had very good care. The food wasn't so great because they didn't have too much, but the Czech people were extremely nice to us.

When did you get reunited with your husband?

Then after the war, when I came out from the hospital, I found a few friends in Pilsen, which is a town in [NON-ENGLISH] We are alive and we are here. They came to visit us. One of the girls-- that lives now in New York, her name is Zosia Bakalasz. Her husband was with my husband together in camp. He didn't survive.

And she says, Sally, now you are able to go and to walk. You are feeling a little bit better. How about we should take the train and go to Prague, which is a big city? We will find out there what's going on, if somebody survived, if we'll be able to find somebody. I said, OK.

So we got a pass from the American authorities to use the train, because we didn't have no money. We didn't have anything. But the Burgermeister from the town-- which like here, we call our mayor-- brought us clothes, and we got that permission to go to Prague. We came to Prague. We found out a big concentration of people from survivors is in one of the schools in Prague.

I went there. I found a few of my friends there. And they told me in this and this hospital came a shipment of men from this camp and from other camps. I said, you know, Sasha, let's go. We find maybe your husband is alive. Maybe my husband is alive.

But meantime, it was in different places-- from the Red Cross, places where you can register yourself, like for instance, tell your name and you survive, from which town you are. You're looking for your husband or your parents, and you gave them all the information.

I left the information, I am Sally Rettman. My husband's name is Jakob Rettman. I am from Bedzin, and the date and everything, all the information, all my backgrounds from my family. But I was not successful.

So I said, Sophie, why should we stay here? I am really tired. Let's take the train and go back to Langesdorf, where my sisters are and my friends. And we stayed there a few days, and then we go again hunting for the husbands.

In the meantime, I came back to my sister's and I stayed with them a few days. During midnight one day, the door is knocking. Somebody knocks on the door. And two guys-- so my girlfriend, what is now in Israel, she opens the door.

And one of the fellow said, is here Jakob Rettman? By name, a woman, Sally Rettman? She said, yes. So he said, I am Jakob Rettman. She knew my husband. He said, sir, I think you have the wrong Sally Rettman.

He saw in Prague, in the Red Cross, Sally Rettman is looking for Jakob Rettman. He saw the two names. He was so excited, he didn't check if I am from Bedzin, and that guy was from Lázně. And the names were the same.

Oh, a different Jakob Rettman.

That's right. So he came and he was very disappointed, and he cried. So we fed him. We tried to find something, something like pens and another shirt for him, and we gave him a loaf of bread. And he went back to Prague to hunt for his wife.

I was hunting for my husband. He was hunting for his wife. The names were the same, but the wrong people. A week later, we went to [PLACE NAME].

To where?

[PLACE NAME]. It's a city in Czechoslovakia. The same girlfriend. And there we found out our shipment of people from a concentration camp came to a hospital.

So I went with my girlfriend to the hospital and I walked from bed to bed, and asked each guy, from where are you? From which city? Did you see, by any chance, somebody by name Jakob Rettman?

Did you see-- I start to mention names from members of my family. But they were all from different parts of Poland, nothing from our hometown. So I was, again, disappointed. And here was already 7 o'clock. We were not allowed because there was a curfew, and we're only allowed to go till 7 o'clock.

So my girlfriend and myself, we slept on the steps in the hospital till the following morning. Following morning, we took the streetcar, or the bus, whatever the transportation, and we found out different places where are concentrating people from concentration camp. But again, we're unsuccessful. I didn't find anybody.

We went back to the main station in Prague, tired, hungry. We found a place, a stand, where the Red Cross put up, so we got some soup and a little bit bread. And we had stew. We hold a blanket. That's the only security we had, was the blanket.

You still had your blankets with you?



No, not anymore. And we couldn't go out anymore because it was 7 o'clock. So we took the blanket on the floor. We slept on the station. In the morning, train came from Katowice, and one of the people saw me. She was from our town.

She said, Sally, do you know I am just coming from Bedzin. Do you know I saw Jakob, your husband? I said, did you?

She said, yes. He is in Bedzin. He lives with his sister, which survived from Auschwitz, his older sister. She lives now in Cleveland, the older lady.

And the reason my husband didn't come right after the liberation to Bedzin, because when he was sent to Kittlitztreben, to the concentration camp, when we got separated in Greenberg, he said, Sally, if God will give and one of us will survive, let's not look each other no place. Let's not get lost. If you survive, you come to Bedzin. If I survive, I will wait for you in Bedzin.

And this is exactly what happened. He came to Bedzin, and he stayed and wait for me. But he saw a lot of girls in Bedzin from Greenberg. And when they saw my husband on one side of the street, they walked on the other side. Because everyone from Greenberg who was survived, from the 120 girls, knew it was impossible I should be alive-- I was so sick, and how it was physically impossible I should survive.

And nobody wanted to tell him that--

That's right.

--you were probably dead?

That's exactly. So one day, my husband went to Katowice by train from Bedzin. And he saw a boy, which he knew from home.

He said, from where are you coming now? He says, I'm coming now from [NON-ENGLISH]. Do you know, by any chance, you saw someplace my wife? He said, no, I don't even know your wife.

And if I show you a picture, would you be able to recognize? He said, if you show me the picture, maybe. So he showed the picture. And he said, if I am not mistaken, I saw that face in Prague on the station. So my girlfriend and myself, we went back to Langesdorf, where my sisters lived, and I took out a pass from the American authorities to be able to go into Poland.

And we both went to Poland. Took us a few days because it was very hard with transportation. We were in open trains to where I arrived to Poland. And in Poland, in our town, my husband was waiting for me.

Do you remember when you first saw him?

When I first saw him, I was told, he is with his sister, because his sister used to have a big building in Bedzin. So he lived with his sister on the fifth floor with a cousin, which the cousin is still now in Poland.

And I knock on the door. And my sister-in-law, which is now a sister-in-law, opened the door. She didn't know me and I didn't know her.

But when she opened the morning, it was 6 o'clock in the morning when I arrived to Bedzin. She said, are you Sally? I said, yes. Is Jakob here? She said, yes.

So she went into the other room and she said, Jakob, get up. Your wife is-- no, she said, Jakob, get up. Somebody wants to see you.

So he said, just a minute. I will put on pants and I will come out. No, you can go out in the pajamas. And he saw me in the hall, and it was a very happy reunion. And he saw me the first time.

How did you get out of Poland then?

We stayed in Poland only five or six weeks, not long. From there, my husband, my sister, and myself, we went to Budapest. We stayed in Budapest, and my sisters were still in [NON-ENGLISH]. In Budapest we stayed maybe nine months, because we were planning, from Budapest, to go with the Aliyah to Israel.

Then it was very hard to get it, so we decided to go back to Germany, I mean to [NON-ENGLISH] to my sisters. And my sisters, at that time, were not anymore in [NON-ENGLISH]. They were in Germany, in Retz. This is in Bayern. And we went to Germany and we reunited with my sisters. And there I stay till we were able to register ourselves for our quota to come to the United States.

And when did you come to the United States?

In 1949.

So you were in Germany for four years after the war?

Yes.

Approximately four years.

Yeah.

And you landed in New York City in 1949?

'49, with my daughter Leah.

Is there any one thing, out of those years, that you would want to share with us, one major thing, anything that you haven't gotten into?

You mean what I didn't mention?

Feelings. Yes. Your feelings or your experiences.

My experience right now, I was very lucky. I was able to come to this country and to raise my children right here in a free country, which I am very, very thankful for it. Yeah.

Do you ever think maybe it was meant to be that way?

I would be more happy when I would be able to have my whole family, but if this is the case and God wants it that way, I was lucky I survived and I found my husband and be here.

OK. Thank you, once again, for participating in this project. I think we can fade out from here. That's a pretty good note to end it on.