

You got title up?

OK.

Maiden name was Stein.

Simon.

Oh, Simon.

B-E-R-G-E-R.

Right.

OK, fine. And you'll get the count through the window.

Yeah, get it in the hole.

Yeah.

This is the National Council of Jewish Women Holocaust Archive project in Cleveland, Ohio. We have with us Beatrice Berger of University Heights, a Cleveland suburb, who is Beatrice Simon in-- from the far eastern tip of Czechoslovakia, where it is the border of Romania, where at that point was the border of Romania and is now the border of Ukraine, USSR-- was taken to Auschwitz and other places. Beatrice, tell us first about your home community and what life was like as a child with you and your family.

Well, having been born in Czechoslovakia, which was referred to as-- that point as the only democracy in Europe, little America, my parents were comfortable business people. I had a nice childhood and quite a nice, normal life as-- until 1944, when we were actually-- we were taken over by the Hungarians in 1939.

That's when my life turned topsy-turvy, as being a Czech citizen, things were nice. In 1939, March 1939, when Hitler started dividing up Europe, my part of Czechoslovakia became Hungary. That was the first drama, becoming a Hungarian. With it came Nazism and all the prejudices that I have not experienced as being a Czech citizen. They were there as a Hungarian, slowly but surely creeping up.

First of all, we were a business family. They started restricting-- taking away licenses. Jews couldn't do this. Jews couldn't do that. Jews started being pulled in, and the bearded Jews especially, and told-- because those that were obviously Jewish, tortured. Yet for some reason or other, we managed to keep our license and stay in business. Being observant Jews, we were not kept business open on Shabbos, on Saturday.

Then came a law that if you want to keep your license open, you keep your business open on Monday, you've got to keep it open on Saturday. So a ruling came that the youngest member of the family who can be trusted in that business is going to become-- and I'm going to use a Jewish word and explain it-- a Shabbos goy, which means, keep the business open the youngest member that could be trusted in order not to lose the livelihood, in order not to lose the business, which was called, at that time, the first Jewish law of restriction.

What type of business was this?

We had textile store, fashion textiles, since in Europe, there were dressmakers, not ready-made clothes in my time, in my part of Europe at that time. We had textiles, fashion materials, and accessories, and yard goods, mostly.

How big a city was this?

I'm not-- I couldn't recall. But we were about-- at the time of deportation, I was active in the so-called ghetto office. We were 500 Jewish families.

And a total population?

And the total population, I might not-- like I say, I don't know exactly for sure, I would say about 3,000-4,000. But this is not a fact. I'm not sure of it.

Was it a community that was large enough to have electricity and water power?

Oh, yes, we did in my-- and yes, we did have electricity in my home.

Tell us about your home and your family.

Well, my family, like I say, we were considered prosperous family, a lovely home. My father died of natural causes soon after, in 1939, soon after we were-- we became Hungarian. And the immediate family that was left behind, and those of us that were consequently taken to Auschwitz, was my mother, a married sister, and brother-in-law, and their two children. And I had a brother a year older than me, a sister two years younger than me-- by the way, no, my brother was two years older and my sister two years younger. I was in the middle of them.

My brother was taken away to what they did to young men at that time, into the labor camps. First, instead, when they needed, the Jew was no longer trusted as a soldier, they took him into forced labor. This was my brother, two years older. And then things were getting progressively worse, more incidents, more beating, more Jewish law. But still at home, still what was the immediate family, we were still all together until April '44. April '44 is when they started closing in.

The Hungarian government.

The Hungarian government, at that time, was starting to close in, quote, "the ghettos." Now, since we were on the main street, a big house, a prosperous family, this was the section of the town that was closed in for the ghetto. That meant the windows facing the streets were whitewashed so that we cannot see what's going on.

And hundreds and hundreds of people from smaller-- people, Jewish people, were brought in from smaller towns into that enclosure of the ghetto, which meant we had people in the barns. We had people in the wood sheds. We had people in the backyard, while since my home, where I was born, was part of the ghetto, again, I was a bit privileged because we were-- the family quarters were taken away. Only one room was left.

We lived quite comfortably. We had more than one room. But as my mother used to-- kept reminding us, you kids are still fortunate. While other people sleep already in a barn, you still sleep on your own floor-- a bare floor, if you will, because they were crowding us on top of each other. But she kept reminding us, remember, it's still your father's roof. And it's still your floor. Those outside are a lot less fortunate than you are.

And then in April of '44, that was Passover, the second day of Passover, the orders came for transport. And my family and I-- out of this Slotvina ghetto, there were two transports. My family and I were chosen for the first one, which meant it started with-- again, I wouldn't remember figures-- started marching. We also had a train station in our town. It started with the first march to a train station, to the cattle cars, with, at that point, Hungarian soldiers with guns.

What were the ages of each of you in the family at this time?

Well, I was 21 years old. My nephews-- my nephew was only three years younger than I because we were an interesting family in a way because my parents raised two generations. My married sister, my-- I was an aunt when I was three years old. So I was 21. My younger sister was 19. My nephew was just 18. And my niece was 16, a beautiful girl with lovely, lovely long hair, pigtails way below her waist, and my mother, who was 60. And those were the people--

And your father?

And my father died in March '39 of cancer. He was buried in Slotvina. There was one grave that I have. The rest is all just someplace, smoke in the horizon, wherever it is. And even though I try not to be emotional after all of these years, I will try to present my story, just-- but it's impossible to leave the emotions out 35 years later.

So we got on the cattle, on the now-infamous cattle cars with a bucket of water and another bucket for toilet facilities. Again, I don't remember how many people were in one cattle car, but god, were we crowded. There was no room to stand. There was no room to sit.

And at this point, my family was still huddled together. I also-- I don't remember exactly how many days it took the train to Auschwitz. But I do remember vividly arriving there. It was in the middle of the night.

And that's when I first came to know the real German butchers-- right, left, right, left. Of my immediate family, my younger sister and I went to the right. And the rest of my family went to the left. And I'm going to stay with my sister and myself.

We wound out in the C Lager. We were in Auschwitz from April until August. Of course, we were-- I must mention this. I was 21 years old, young, sheltered, innocent because I was fortunate to be raised in a prosperous family. My hair is still red. And it was red. It was shoulder-length hair.

And when I got into the chambers for shaving our heads, the butcher that shaved my head played with my beautiful red hair, told me how beautiful my red hair is. The first cut was in the center of my head, with-- to show me. And then he took out a mirror. And he showed me how better looking I am with the-- and complimented me on my healthy, young, well-groomed red hair.

And then when he ran across some, the first cut on my hair, he took out a mirror and showed me that he's going to make me a lot better-looking. And needless to say, this is an innocent girl. And you're stark naked. And a man shaves you, not just your hair, but all over. This is a 21-year-old sheltered, innocent girl.

And those are-- for those of us that survived, we went to the right. We were destined to go to labor. We wound up in an Auschwitz working close-- nearby the crematorium. Every morning, we marched out. We saw the pile of clothes. I remember one horrendous part of my-- it's coming to me as I'm talking to you.

The first real dehumanizing effect was-- I got the diarrhea. And I was marching with the toilet facilities with me on my march, couldn't go out. This was my first dehumanizing experience after having my hair cut. And we were walk-- daily, we were taken out to work near the crematoria, came back to the camps. There were the daily Appells, the counts, whether everybody who was taken out came back.

The total clothing was one dress. I also remember, then, as soon after I got there, and those what they called the sleeping facilities, the shelves, whatever, one of my breasts got caught between two boards. And I developed an infection. They did have an infirmary, but you were afraid to go there. So the total clothing we had was a sort of a slip and dress.

My younger sister tore her slip, and bandaged me, and cared, and took care. And by my sister's-- happens to be fortunately enough. She's living in Cleveland. And her name is Rose Mayer now. She tore her shirt.

And I have a scar on my breast. I had a terrible infection. And I'm right now in 1984 in Cleveland, Ohio telling about it. So there must be some reason why some of us made it and others just didn't. On the normal sanitary conditions, the kind of infection that a young girl had on her breast, she probably would have not made it. Yet this woman made it.

I want you to go back a little bit, back to before you went to the camps, and tell us about your home life, and your family, relationships, and your schooling, and your relationships with both the Jews and the Jewish community-- that is, where you socialist, Zionist, or anything-- and your relationships with the Gentile community, and how those relationships changed up to the time you went away.

Until 1939, living was easy. It was nice. We got along real well. And they were peasants. And there were Gentile friends who were not peasants. Because there was an incident that is worth mentioning prior to that. We had some lovely furniture, and which at one time, my father bought it. When he came home-- in the 1918, the Crown Prince of the Austro-Hungarian Empire had a castle not too far away from us. And he had a mistress there.

And when Czech-- when Hungarian in 1918-- when my father came home-- he was in America during the First World War. Those furnishings was put on public auction. My father bought that furniture. And this is what I was raised in. In 1939, when we became Hungarian again, the Hungarians called my mother a robber of that furniture, decided persecuting her, that in a Jewish-- lovely Jewish home, there were furniture of a crown prince of.

There was a friend of my father's who was the mayor of the town among the, if you will-- the lack of another word-- an aristocratic Hungarian. He did come. When we talk about Righteous Gentiles, this is the first one that I have encountered.

When my mother was accused of owning this furniture illegally, he came forward at a great risk to himself and to his reputation, testifying that he was a friend of my father's, and he was at the auction, and that my father was the highest bidder. And that's how he got the furniture. So that's the first Righteous Gentile I have met.

And that was the general relationship at home with most of the Gentile neighbors. The peasants had respect. We did business with them. They worked some of our fields, never encountered any unpleasantness with any of my Gentile neighbors until we were Czech.

When we became Hungarian, the entire situation has changed. And slowly-- I'm glad I remember to mention how he risked his reputation, and came forward, and saved my mother from a lot of physical punishment by testifying that he was part-- he was at the auction, that the furniture was not robbed. But when I got home, if I'm skipping, when we came home, back for a brief period to Slotvina, there was an awful lot of hostility and resentment when my sister and I got back. Also, my oldest sister's husband survived.

You're talking about after the war?

After the war already. My oldest sister's husband survived. My sister and her two children didn't. And since he became my brother-in-law when I was less than a year old and Father died young, he was like a father image. So when we were liberated, my younger sister and this brother-in-law, he took us-- being so much older, he became like our father.

And the three of us made a short return trip back to Slotvina. Because since we were a family of means, fairly intelligent, I had the equivalent about-- they did not have high school. They had what they called a polgári or [NON-ENGLISH]. I had about the equivalent of 10 years, which qualified for 10 years of education.

What was your major language?

Czech. My language was Czech. When I had to learn in 1939, when it became my responsibility as the youngest member who could be trusted in the store, I had to learn Hungarian. And I took it to night school.

Did you speak Yiddish at home?

At that point at home, we spoke Yiddish. And school was Czech. I had to learn Hungarian after we were occupied. They said liberated by the Hungarians. And I say occupied by the Hungarians. I had to learn Hungarian in order to-- I became the youngest member of the family. According to the rabbis, being observant, an observant Jew does not work on Saturday. So it was destined. It's a matter of survival, either the store stays open on the Sabbath or the license is taken away. Then it became very important for me to know how to speak Hungarian.

Right. This would have been after the Munich Agreement and then the partition of Czechoslovakia.

Yes.

And the remnants went to Hungary.

Yes. Then Sudetenland went to-- when part of Czechoslovakia became Sudetenland in German, ours became--  
Hungary.

--he felt that this become from Hungary, that Czechoslovakia had no business there. The Czech government was exiled.  
1938.

That was in 1939, March '39.

'39.

March '39.

And then the Hungarian troops, and the courts, and such--

And then in March--

--troops come in.

--in March, the Hungarian troops came in in force-- and that's why I say the slogan. The chant was that we were liberated, that Hungary got back what was theirs. But of course, those of us that lived for the years from-- this was 21 years under a Czech regime. We felt occupied, not liberated.

A free nation, Czechoslovakia.

We were a free nation. We were called the little democracy, the European democracy, little America.

And no fascism?

No, no.

No antisemitism?

During the life in Czechoslovakia, I experienced no prejudices.

When the Hungarians came in, did they move in civilian settlers also?

No, not-- they came in because the peasants and the Gentile population, a lot of it was Hungarian. Only those, the small minority of us who were born after 1918, were really Czechs because my part of the country is very complicated in geography too.

Under the same generation, the same roof, the same mother, my mother would have probably been a Hungarian because when she had to talk to my teacher, she did not speak Czech. And I did not speak Hungarian because this was Austria-Hungary until 1918. And the dominant language was Hungarian.

Now, those of us when this part of Europe became Czechoslovakia and the Czech-- when I started school, since I was born in 1923, then I started the Czech school. And whatever formal education Hitler allowed, I had it in Czech. The plans for me was after I finished this so-called *polgári*, I was to go to a junior college. I had a good business sense. And I was going to be sent to Uzhhorod for a two-year-old business college. I never made it because Hitler intervened.

What was your outlook on life before Hitler?

To put it very simply, since my father was an American, I had family in America, and if the thought ever came up of coming to move, to leave, I did not ever anticipated leaving there. I was happy. I had a beautiful home. I had never any reason wanting to leave there until the war turned topsy-turvy.

I had a happy childhood, a comfortable home. The biggest and the first tragedy of my life was my father. I wasn't quite 16 when my father died. But he was ill with cancer for many, many years. And I was 16 years old when he died. So even the first three or four years before the-- the first two, three years of the Hungarian occupation, it wasn't really very bad.

Well, once the war started, how did your life change? And what changes did your family have to make?

Well, first of all, it became that we were restricted, like you couldn't go there. You couldn't do this. Or we were not allowed to go to a movie anymore. You should-- you were afraid to go here and there. Because already, bearded Jews were the first ones that started beating up without any problems, without any provocation at all.

So one mistake I feel that we all made, and why I feel that this interview is so very, very important, because when one Jew's beard was pulled, we figured, well, it's just an isolated incident. If we're going to behave ourselves, we're not going to get involved, it's just going to go away.

Well, it didn't go away. And it will never go away. If they beat my neighbor and I'm going to look the other way, today, in 1984, in blessed United States of America, it is wrong. I cannot look away. I've got to get involved. I have to ask why. I have to take a risk that the next blow is going to come my way. If I learned anything from the past, I've learned that very strongly. Just because it's not me who was being beaten, that doesn't mean that it's going to go away.

After you were put into the ghetto and your windows were whitewashed, what physically-- what physical changes came about? You mentioned you worked in the ghetto office yourself. Was there a Judenrat in the town?

What they were trying to do-- supposedly give us a norm that they wanted to-- that were people that were being facilitated. The men at that time, most of them were in the forced labor camps. The Jewish population, most of it was women and children at the time of the ghetto because the younger men, like I mentioned my older brother wasn't in the ghetto. He was in a labor camp, in [HUNGARIAN], where they didn't trust him to carry-- to be a soldier for the Hungarians. But the forced labor was done by the young men.

So by establishing an office, they were trying-- this was all the facade. And we honestly believed-- none of us believed, even though we were fairly informed. I must mention that during the Polish occupation, we were listening to the illegal English broadcasts, the equivalent of Voice of America-- it escapes me what it was called during the war. There were broadcast. Our president, the Czech president, was exiled in London. We knew what was going on in Poland, as much as was able to get it out of the illegal radio, the London broadcast.

Specifically, what did you know?

We were knew that things are very difficult. We did not knew or suspect about concentration camps, or mass murders, or extermination, to give you a point. Since my mother was older and she lived through the First World War, so we started putting away possessions-- a little bit of jewelry, a little bit of money. Not because ever dreaming that we'll be exterminated or we'll never come back.

It used to be that there is going to be turmoil, the war is going to come to an end, there is going to be looting. There is going to be-- we have to protect ourselves for a short period. It's all-- we were going to be taken away. It's only going to be until the turmoil is going to settle.

In 1944, we had no idea about the concentration camps. When we got on the trains, we didn't know we were getting for

a death camp. We thought we were being relocated until things was going to be settled, never aware of a death camp until those cattle cars opened in Auschwitz. And the stench and the smell in the middle of the night is when it hit first that we are getting-- we got into a death camp. We thought we were going to relocation centers.

We've now gone back to-- in our minds back to Auschwitz, where you were talking a few minutes ago about your injury and your ability to survive. So now, starting at the beginning at Auschwitz, tell us exactly what happened to you as you arrived.

So as we arrived, the cattle cars opened. And there were Nazis all around us with bayonets with guns, saying left, and right, and left, and right, while we were holding hands not to get separated by crowds. I remember having a Nazi cut me off. I was holding my married sister's hand on one side and my younger sister's hand on the other because we were afraid of being separated by crowds. And on the other side of my older sister was my mother and her two children.

And they all went to the chimneys. And my younger sister, Rose, and I wound up in the C Lager, which was the work Lager. We worked there under superhuman conditions, mostly-- most of the work was we were taken out every single day after this horrible, long standing counts.

I have seen during those counts, Zahlappell-- I have seen a beautiful German. Her name escapes me, the beast, kick a pregnant woman to death. She spotted her in line. And she was pregnant. She took her out of line and kicked her to death. We were lined up five by five by five to count us.

The same day, I wound up marching out to the camps working. Well, I'll never forget how a young, beautiful German-- she was Ilse something. She was infamous. She was part of the Nuremberg crowd. But I saw her kick a pregnant woman to death maybe after less than a week in Auschwitz, after a very sheltered environment and from a very lovely home.

I remember the name Ilse Koch-- K-O-C-H.

Something-- it is the same. It escapes me. But she was one of the one, very infamous Nazi women. And she was, to the best of my recollection, she came to trial in Nuremberg. But some of these things are just coming back to me now because when I decided to become involved in this interview, I wasn't just quite sure what I did remember and what I didn't. But as I talk about it, it all floods in on me.

I know that it's hard to-- you're actually reliving the past as you're speaking here. And we appreciate.

As the memories-- it seems that my mind is becoming open to things that have been closed up for 35 years.

I want to ask you about-- you said you had a disability.

Yeah.

And this physical handicap, you describe this for us. In your own words, tell us what followed.

Well, I was born with a dislocated hip, which was taken care of when I was two and a half years old. As I mentioned, prior to that, I had intelligent parents with means. They took me to Vienna. They took care of it when I was two and a half years old. But it left me with a small limp. And this is how I got into Auschwitz. And since only the fit and the healthy was to survive. And there was a young woman with a visible limp.

Now, the way my friend-- so I came a strong believer that there was some reason and purpose for me surviving. It wasn't just that the fit made it and the unfit didn't, even though his goal was the Aryan race, just the perfect was going to be. There was a young woman with a limp staying Zahlappell daily, going through selections.

My friends and-- used to crowd in. Since we were lined up five high, they protected me, trying to shield me from making my limp visible. The first five rows moved in closer. The five rows behind me came in closer. I was never the one on outside lane. They always had me centered, trying to save me, that a Nazi would not notice my limp because

there was no life for imperfection. Yet I marched.

Yet I worked on a pile of-- when I watch the Holocaust movie, which was still dramatization, and I saw the main character of the movie working on a pile of rocks on the front of a crematoria, I thought, I recognized the rock. I was on that pile. I carried those rocks, now, fully realizing that the movie was a dramatization. But the location of that rock pile at that particular time-- I also know a lot of people who did not want to watch that movie.

For some reason or other, I watch, I read, I never shied away from reading all of these materials. I read it and I watched it. And as I was sitting in my small University Heights little den. And I saw this main character of the movie on a rock pile. I said, my god, this is the rock pile where I was in. This is the rocks that I carried with a physical disability, with a visible limp.

And I made it out of there in August to a labor camp to Frankfurt, Germany. I mean, out of there, it means leaving Auschwitz. And August, I got into Auschwitz. In April '44-- stayed in Auschwitz till August '44, where we were taken by, again, a cattle car-- still, at that point, it was luxury accommodations-- to a labor camp and to Frankfurt-am-Main, which was the heart of Germany-- out of Poland, into Germany. This was already August '45. The Allies were near. Germany was being bombarded pretty heavily. Frankfurt--

August of '44.

August of '44. They needed an extension of camouflaging of the Frankfurt airport. They took a contingent of 1,700 girls out of Auschwitz. And this was my next labor camp. We cut the trees. We-- but then I'm saying 1,700 Jewish girls with shaven heads, but the same one dress that you got in April when you were freezing to death during the Zahlappells, you were working on an airfield in the hot sun.

We cut the trees. We uprooted them. We camouflaged the existing airfield. And we started building the next one. We stayed there until October doing this work, all in the same one dress-- the 90-degree summer or the 60-degree fall. Went out daily.

There was a fairly new work camp. The conditions were cleaner. There were some sanitary facilities because it was a work camp. And it was hastily built. They needed the labor. They needed the labor.

And the Allies were becoming very close to us. There were times when they even dropped leaflets that they knew that we were a contingent of forced labor, Jewish women. The bombs came. They rushed us into the woods. We were bombarded around there.

And the only thing it sounds-- it would sound very careless and very whatever. At that point, we were so dehumanized that when the bombs fell, we were not afraid of a bomb. We were just afraid that a stale piece of bread is going to be left to the next one. You got a piece of bread for the whole day's work.

And when they made you lie down in the forest to protect you from the bomb, the first thing you did is you ate your piece of bread. You were not afraid of dying. But you didn't want to die without the piece-- without a piece of bread. Because by that time, we were already not human and very, very starved. The bread became the most important-- a stale piece of bread was more important than life.

And had one of us-- picking up a leaflet would have been immediately being shot, yet some of them did. And we read them. And they tried to give us courage. Yet when it came very dangerously close, they picked us up and marched us back to Silesia. This time, there was no more train facilities for the labor force. This time-- this was my experience of my first death march-- no more cattle cars, marching on foot.

What period was this?

This was about October '44.



Then you went to other labor camps?

We moved to another labor camp which is in Zillertal, which is situated in Silesia. Again, my memory fails me. I don't know how many days we were on this camp and-- on this death march. And coming back to my disability, whatever supplies were, they were put on wagon. There were no more horses for forced labor, no more cars because they were needed elsewhere. And the girls were pulling the supply wagons.

And my disability got so bad, my hip got so painful, and if you fell out of line, that was a shot in the head. And that was it. I've seen it happen to others. Why it didn't happen to me, it's been always a mystery. I got to a point where my hip was so painful that I didn't care what happens. I wanted to leave the march and go to the side.

And lo and behold, there was someplace there a Nazi-- and it must have been a man because the women were worse-- who allowed me to get on a supply wagon. And my friends, my people, who were just as starved, just as whatever, just had 50 extra pounds to pull on that wagon.

And I made it to Zillertal. Do you understand what I'm saying? Some of them, if you fell out of line, went to the ditch and got a shot in the head. There was something in my destiny that I was meant to be here.

I got on that wagon. All those very, very poor girls did not object to the extra load on the wagon. And a Nazi allowed it. And I made it into Zillertal, which was a textile factory.

You said the women guards were worse than the men.

Yes.

Could you tell us in what way, exactly?

More cruel. When I'm talking now about work camps, if your supervisors were women, they took particular joy not letting you go. This is-- we're talking now about a factory where there were toilet facilities. You had to ask permission to go. Where a man would give you the permission, a woman wouldn't.

She cherished and enjoyed the discomfort that comes when you only-- when your entire food is a bowl of warm water, which they called coffee, and a piece of stale bread, and for noon, some water and potato peels. You have to go to the bathroom if you're still alive. While a man would allow it, a woman would not.

This is how I simply can put it, where the women were more cruel. And I also feel, during the trip over, when I was allowed on top of that wagon, instead of being shot on the roadside, if it would have been to a woman, that would not have come.

Were the women members of the SS?

SS. They were SS uniform women guards, men guard. Also, what I found while-- I did not have, fortunately, that experience. And while at that time, I was probably too naive, and too young, and too small town to know what was going on, today, looking back, the women were a bigger threat because the men were afraid to come on for sexual advances to us because A, first of all, we didn't look much like women. And then there was a death penalty to them too.

In my experience, that was probably when I first became aware of homosexuality, of lesbianism-- women granting favors to the girls for sexual favors. While I didn't understand it then, it took for me to grow up and to mature to know what was happening, that that's how women took advantage, were more. In my opinion, it was more difficult to work under SS women than SS men.

So we worked in Zillertal till February. And please, remember-- I remember there was one pink dress that I got in May again. And whether the work was more needed or when the Allies closed in at this point, I'm not sure.

Another death march was destined. And from there, we were destined for another death camp. We marched from Zillertal into Ravensbrück, a very infamous place. Again, the war camps are not so well-known, but everybody's familiar with Auschwitz and Ravensbrück. It was, again, a very long death march

Ravensbrück, geographically--

Ravensbrück is in the heart of Germany.

--Germany-- back from Silesia into the fatherland. Somehow or other, it was February, with wooden shoes, one dress. And if the conditions were deplorable and inhuman in Auschwitz in May-- or was it April when we got there-- the Ravensbrück is beyond description as far as rats all over and as far as-- if you talked about lack of sanitary conditions in Auschwitz, the ones in Ravensbrück, I couldn't begin to explain.

And we were sure that this was our final destination. Because they always said that even if the war is lost, those of us that are working, in the last minute, they'll have enough time to take care of us. Yet again, for to some unexplained reason, except which I call in my own way of fate, another transport was made, another march was made, and this time, out of Ravensbrück back into my home country of Czechoslovakia to the Sudetenland.

From there, wound up once again in an electronic factory-- Jablonec was during the free Czechoslovakia. Jablonec was famous for custom jewelry. Europe's best custom jewelry used to be made in Jablonec. Those factories were converted. For some reason or other, we worked with electronics.

And this was-- we got to March or April of '45 into the Sudetenland. Into again-- whenever you were in a work camps, living conditions were a little more human. There were toilet facilities. The food didn't improve any. But somehow or other, since you were in a-- you worked indoors in a factory, it was a little more human than in an air field.

And then on a beautiful May morning of 1945-- it was May 8-- an order came for another march. And they gave us a bread that is supposed to last for eight days. Here and there, there used to leak in and a little news that they're lose-- the German is losing the war. There used to be a kind of a strip of newspaper. And since you went to a factory and you were allowed to use a toilet facility, a scrap of newspaper here and there, you were exposed to. And we were aware that the war is coming to an end. And the German is losing it.

I'll have to backtrack, if you will allow me, to a Righteous Gentile, which brings me back to Frankfurt. On this detail, when we were working on the airfield, they had elderly men. They were not SS.

They were called the OTs. For what the initials are-- were for, I don't know. But they were an engineering corps, as best as I can identify with it. And once again, I was very lucky.

Among 1,700 women, I and three others were selected to work with this engineer and carry his equipment-- the measuring devices, the things that engineers do when they are building. This was such a kind human being, he was a man about in his 50s.

Since we were a small group, three or four of us, I can't recall exactly how many of us were there, he used to sneak in an apple, knowing full well how very it is. But most importantly, what he did was give us an awful lot of courage. At that point, by the way, I have mastered the German.

Go ahead.

Yeah? At that point, when I was in Frankfurt, I spoke German already, which was instrumental in me getting this preferred job. I have a good ear for language. I learn quickly. So when I got to Frankfurt, the fact that I spoke German got me this privileged job and working with this engineer.

Do you remember his name?

No. But the point I'm trying to make is he kept saying, I wish-- don't give up hope, girls. The war is lost. I wish I was you. I wish I was Jewish. I wish I wasn't German because the future is yours. He used to give us courage. And the reason I track back to him-- on May 8, when I was liberated, what happened was when we were coming out of the factory, they gave us bread.

And again, the bread and the starvation was so dominant. And I still had this lovely younger sister of mine with me, without whom I would have never made it. I said, Sister, this is one more march. I am not going to survive. My hips just will not handle it. And what I did is I took that stale bread and ate it from one end to the end like a wild animal. They gave us the bread. They said, it's supposed to last for a week.

Told my sister, I am not going to survive this trip. But once again, I wouldn't leave the bread behind. My sister was very concerned. If this farmer survived eight days without bread, she managed, somehow or other, to sneak behind a supply wagon and steal another bread for me.

We'll wait there.

And we started marching. You want me to continue?

Rest. Yeah. I think it's time you should pause.

I was hoping to do this without emotion, but I can't.

No, no. But take a drink. Go to the washroom. Wash your face.

Thank you. No, I'm fine.