

We're talking again with Beatrice Berger of University Heights, a Cleveland suburb. She is a survivor of the Holocaust. I'm Sidney Elsner. And you were telling us, Beatrice, about a German who was a member of the OT, which, I recall, stood for Organisation Todt, like the Engineering Corps, the builders. That was under Albert Speer, the armaments minister. Tell us, now, you left off in your previous reel telling about the last day, the first day of liberation, when you had the loaf of bread.

Yeah.

Go right ahead.

So this was May 8. The war was over. And they were giving us-- they didn't tell us the war was over. This was in the Sudetenland, in Jablonec, in the backyard of my beloved Czechoslovakia. And as we started marching and we realized-- normally, in every march we took prior to that, we were marching with the German troops.

On May 8, we were marching in the opposite direction. Masses and masses of German troops were going one way. And we were going to the other. And we realized that. And a few-- just about an hour out of the camp, the SS women shed their uniforms and appeared in dresses. At that point, I must mention, at the day of liberation, I weighed all of 60 pounds. And I was almost 22 years old-- much of a human being, 60 pounds, a young woman, 22 years old.

And when we saw that the SS-- and in that particular camp, as I mentioned prior, that when we worked under women, the situations were tougher-- the SS women was-- not less than an hour out of camp turned up in civilian dresses. So all of a sudden, the 60-pound half-dead girl who didn't want to start out the march in the morning became a full of life, full of strength, full of health because I realized that what this old 50-year-old OT told me in August in Frankfurt, that if I'll have perseverance and if I'll have guts, I am going to survive.

And I thought of him then and the masses of German faces that were massed, marching in the opposite direction. I said to myself, please, God, let me recognize him. Let me touch him. Let me hug him. And let me tell him that he is a human, and he's a German, and I will remember him for the rest of my life. I never encountered him. His name just came to me-- Franz was his name, something or other.

And we continued. And my part of liberation was-- there was still fighting in Prague. And we were in the Sudeten. Like I say, we were back in my beloved Czechoslovakia. And it comes back to me, it was May. The Nazis left us. And we were left in the middle of a highway without supervision. At that point, we just didn't know what to do without supervision. We were not human anymore. We were so robot-like.

And I remember, some of my-- the same girl who said in the morning, she's going to die, and she's going to eat her bread, I said, my god, we're in Czechoslovakia. And there were the budding gardens. As we kept marching on, there was a May garden, not too much in it yet. And I saw a couple of girls go in and wanted-- we were starved-- wanted to ravish the garden.

And this 60-pound redheaded girl with a very bad hip emerged. I said, anybody that is going to get into that garden, this is Czechoslovakia, and we're human beings. And this garden is going to grow. And we're going to survive. And an hour later, we found ourselves in a Czech village, where they greeted us as human beings.

And my sister and I remember it now jokingly, the Czechs didn't have much, either. They were persecuted. They didn't have much. But whatever they had, they started sharing with us, especially with those of us that spoke the language. There is something about coming into a country and speaking the language that makes you different, that makes you belong.

Had I been liberated in Poland or had I been liberated in France, I probably would not have felt like I was liberated in Czechoslovakia. And the people that were extending a helping hand to me spoke-- I spoke their language. And they gave us the best they had. And my poor sister was stuck with another stale bread.

This is the joke of it all. Because in the morning, she was afraid I'll die if she isn't going to steal a bread for me. By noon, somebody was giving me bread that was fresher. And this was my liberation on May 8, 1945 in a small village in Czechoslovakia.

But that doesn't mean that was the end of the Holocaust. It wasn't. Because there was a homecoming to a home that wasn't there. In spite of everything we saw, in spite of working on the outskirts of the crematoria, we never gave up hope that if we'll make our way back to the town of origin, to this little, small town of Slotvina, somebody's going to be there. Mother's going to be there.

My sister Reisy and I made it. Somebody else would have made it. Everything else we saw, we didn't believe. Saw the chimneys, worked there, but still, the hope was so strong that we will make it back to wherever we were last together. We will be together again.

Well, the only other member that we met there was my older sister's-- I mentioned him previously-- my older sister's husband, who was more like a father because he came into my family when I was a year old. And the three of us started out housekeeping in Czechoslovakia.

This brother-in-law, this brother, this father, a man that I love dearly, stayed close to him till 1980, when he died. The only title I can give him is a brother-in-law, but-- because that's what he was. But the love, the care, devotion that we had for each other after liberation, that was, again, a very special, a very unique, a very privileged relationship.

While he married another woman, lived in New York, he lived with that other woman a lot longer than he lived with my sister. But he stayed our brother. He stayed my father till the day he died. I was with him. So I feel, after everything has been said and done, for some unexplainable reason, yes, I am very privileged and very lucky to be here in Cleveland at Channel 5 studios in July 1984.

Beatrice, first, tell us your brother-in-law's full name.

His name was Saul Vegh.

His last name?

Vegh-- V-E-G-H. My-- we came out here. And I-- my younger sister got married and went to Germany, fell in love with a young man, went to Germany, wound up in a DP camp, and made it to Cleveland, where we had brothers and sisters that lived here before the war, through the war.

This is because, as you said, your parents had two generations of children because they were split by World War I.

My family raised two-- two generations of family because they were married very, very young. And my father came to the States in the turn of the century. And he didn't like most-- a lot of Eastern European immigrants, they didn't want to serve the Kaiser. It was 1900 when my father came here.

Mother was left in Europe pregnant. My oldest brother, when he was a year old, my father brought him out. This is the brother, his name is Saul Simon. He still lives in Cleveland. And god bless him. When this baby was a year old, my father brought him out here, mother and baby. At that time, he was already working in a sweatshop on the Lower East Side.

Of New York.

Of New York. And my mother stayed long enough to have two more children, two more girls. Then there were family obligations-- grandparents, a little of this, a little of that. And one of the parents had to go back. One of my parents had to go back because they had obligation to their parents. And since my father saw an opportunity to make a life in America, a better life for his family here, he at that point was decided that it would be easier if Mother was going to go back. And he will follow or bring them all back.

Whatever the problem in Europe was with my grandparents, I don't know. But a decision was made that Mother and three children should go back. She did go back. And circumstances were such, the First World War broke out.

While my father started prospering in the US, Mother-- he made one more trip back to Europe. In 1910, another child was born. In 1911, that's my sister Lily, who lives right here in Cleveland. She's a widow. And since my father saw opportunity for making a life here for his family better again, he left Mother and four children in Europe and came back here. 1914 came, the war broke out. Mother was in Europe with four children. And my father was in America.

He moved out of the Lower East Side. He came into Cleveland. He had business opportunities and was separated from his family by four years of war. Mother had a very difficult time with four small children in Europe. Then, by 1918, in the meantime, my father prospered here. As soon as the war was over in 1918, he came back to Europe.

What was his business in Cleveland?

He had one of the businesses-- he was associated with a milk dairy, a Cleveland milk dairy. I don't remember exactly which. But he prospered. He made a living. He was a smart man-- not educated, but smart and business wise. And he bought a beautiful home I talked about. He bought a beautiful furniture at the auction.

When the Czech government broke up the castle of the prince-- it sounds like a fairy tale, but it's my life, and I lived it-- he furnished a beautiful home. And he started a second family. In 1921, a brother was born, a young man. 1923 came I, 1925, my younger sister.

In the interim, my father did come back to the States again. He had still business interests here and discovered-- and my older sister, at that time, was already married to this lovely, lovely, lovely man, who by all intents and purposes, was my brother. So my father came back here.

And in the early '30s, before Hitler started rampaging through Europe, my father was back in the States. And he already had two of his older daughters here. One of them was the oldest one, the one that was born in New York, was married to this Saul. And there were plans to bring Mother and the three minor children to the United States. This was in the early '30s. I was seven, eight years old. I must have been seven or eight years old.

My father discovered a growth on his chest, which turned out to have been skin cancer. And after all of his experiences, when he found out he was sick, instead of bringing his family to America, he came home. Home was Europe. Plans were made. One daughter was married, the son was married, his two older daughters were here and single. So there was Mother and the three minor children, his second generation, his little children. He was going to bring us all out here.

And when he discovered he was sick, again, it was fate. My mother loved America. She always wanted to come back. As for me, as much as I can remember, I was happy there. I don't think I wanted to come to America when I was little. But after the liberation, that's all I wanted.

So as fate once again will have it, instead of my father bringing my mother out here, she died in Auschwitz. And my father succumbed to cancer in February 1939. He hated the thought of Hungarian occupation. And he didn't live to see it. He died in February '39. The Hungarians came in March '39.

So when I did make-- go back to Slotvina in 1945, there was a beautiful home, just a shell, a facade. We couldn't find in a big house windows to shelter us from the wind. At this point, there was the three of us, our blessed, beloved brother-in-law, Saul, my sister, Reisy, and I from a huge, huge building. European windows open inside out. They're double windows. They don't move like American windows up. They were double windows.

The facade of the house was there. But we didn't find enough windows in the entire huge building to make-- find shelter in one room. Everything that was being able-- torn. Those were our friends, our Gentiles, our neighbors with whom we got along so very well before all of it. Everything that was being able to be taken away was taken away. The blessedly beautiful furniture that I was so very proud of, we found remnants of the debris. It was probably chopped up for

firewood.

I referred to that furniture earlier when the mayor of the town came to my mother's defense, that she didn't drop to testify that my father bought it at an auction. And the debris was there, a sign of it that it wasn't even used as furniture. It must have been chopped up and used for firewood. These were the people I grew up with.

We stayed there for six weeks. The Russians started closing in. We were afraid we will never be able to get out again. We once again-- the three of us, we ran into-- before the Russian closed the Eastern Ukraine border, my hometown, we made our way into Budapest, consequently to Prague, and started life all over again in the Sudeten until I came-- until the three of us-- once again, Saul, my sister, Reisy, and I, in the town of As, which was on the border of Selb, which was the Western zone, occupied by the Western zone of Czechoslovakia so that we're as far away from Russia.

Because where we were exposed to Russian, as we made after liberation, as we tried to make our way back, where an American GI saw a group of girls in a ditch, he used to throw in a candy bar, a box of cigarettes. We came to a town where we wanted so desperately to make our way back to Slotvina to find Mother, to find a brother, to find, to find, to find.

There was a Russian train. We were vulnerable. We were young. We were innocent. They offered us that they were going to take us home. We were about 20 girls waiting to be entered into our compartment, the train. Until they got in two girls, they didn't let in the last. So it didn't take us long to know that the Russians are not out to help us. They promised to take in 20 to 25 girls and give us a ride on a train. But they only took in two. And god help what happened to those girls in the trains.

So soon enough, we became aware that we cannot expect help from a Russian soldier. He's out to rob, to rape, to murder. So we tried to stay as far away as possible from the Russian zone. We made our way, for safety's sake, for security's sake, to the west. And at that time, it was still As, Sudeten. Yes, there was still American GIs in As in 1948 when I got there.

But you never went to a displaced persons camp?

I never wanted to go back. If I made a resolve to myself that if I made it to Czechoslovakia, this is already Bohemia, this is already the Western zone. If there were occupation people there, they were Americans. I didn't want to-- I wanted to re-establish my citizenship.

I could have probably come to the United States, which I wanted to very badly, a lot sooner, if I would have crossed the border and wound up in a German displaced person camps. I didn't. It was important to me to feel that I have reached home, that I've got roots. I've got citizenships. And I'm coming to America. And I'm going to hold on to the Czech passport until I have a United States citizenship paper. I succeeded.

My younger sister fell in love and did go back to Germany, but married her young man in As, did go back to Germany into a DP camp. And while I was devastated, I was afraid that she gave up her hope for America forever. Because this was my own personal belief-- Germany is no good. DP camp, American HIAS, GIs, whatever, it's Germany. It's no good. This was my own personal belief.

Fortunately for my sister, she fell in love with this young man. Then they spent some time in a DP camp. And I was afraid. I kept saying, how can you do it? How can you give up America? She didn't have to give up America. She made it out here in 1947, while I waited for the Czech quota, which I had a low registration quota because I had to proffer affidavits from my brother, Saul Simon.

Yet because the situation-- the immigration laws were becoming a little crowded here. And some decisions had to be made who's going to come first? A secure person and a secure country of Czechoslovakia or empty the DP camps? The DP camps were-- got priority.

So by the time March 1948 came, and I already had my exit visa, I was happy for two years in As, normal life, nice

apartment. The Czech government-- for the Germans that ran away, they gave us the apartments. And I waited for the Czech quota.

And by the time I already had my exit visa rod, the Iron Curtain dropped. And I was once again in danger of not being able to leave legally because they cut off temporarily, nobody can leave Czechoslovakia, when the Russians' boot once again trampled on my beloved Czechoslovakia. And once again, fate was good. The people who already had their visas had made a designated ship to Sweden.

I was in desperate fear for a week that I will have to cross at night over into the West Germany in order for my family to be able to bring me out to America. But once again, I was fortunate. My visa was honored. My beloved brother-in-law, Saul and I, we made the journey on the ship that we were supposed to make it out of Sweden, Gothenburg.

And I arrived in New York March 21, 1948. My brother and his little girl were waiting for me. Came to Cleveland, learned English, went to work, met my husband, had and have a beautiful, handsome, well-educated American son. And I'm alive. And I survived.

Of all these experiences, what was the most painful for you?

This is very difficult for me to pinpoint what was the most painful. Most likely, making our way back. You asked me earlier about my relationship was and the growing up here with the non-Jewish community. And I said it was good.

When we made it back, a friend of my mother's, Gentile, good relationship, she had planted-- and I talked about earlier about an early garden in the Sudetenland, which was in May. By the time I made it back to Slotvina, it was June, July. The gardens were flourishing. I talked about the house being but a facade. Everything that was able to be schlepped away was schlepped away. And I don't think I have to explain schlepping because anybody that listens to this will know what schlepping means.

But a so-called friend of mine had planted my mother's favorite garden. The house was no house. But the garden was garden. And when I saw this woman in my mother's garden, knowing how much she loved that garden, how she tended for it every spring, and there was that woman, taking my mother's garden was one very horrible experience. She wasn't very friendly. She wasn't very kind. She did not want me to get into the garden.

But I did. As I protected the garden in the Sudeten, not to take out the tender onions before they were riped, I did take every vegetable I could lay my hands on because I felt, it was my mother's garden. And this woman has no right there.

The next experience was we were and we still are-- my sister Reisy and I love to knit. We made our mother a sweater before we were taken away. The second day we were home, we would go down the street. And another so-called ex-friend or neighbor is wearing my mother's sweater.

In the interim, we asked for the sweater back. It was tearing us to pieces, fully realizing their mother is no longer. And this was a hand-knitted sweater, stitch by stitch by stitch by her two little girls. We asked for the sweater back. Not only would she not give the sweater, she was the vindictive and glad that she's alive, and my mother wasn't.

I don't know if I answered your question about my most painful experience. But this is what comes to mind now. One friend tended my mother's garden. Another friend wore my mother's sweater. And I felt on the garden, I could take revenge. I pulled out a carrot. I took out an onion.

But seeing the sweater and the joy that woman had that she is wearing my mother's sweater, and to thinking, my god, I grew up with this lady. We were friends. We were neighbors. She-- I thought she liked us. How can she not want to give us the sweater? But she didn't.

Why do you think you survived?

Well, I have two theories. And they may-- or like I say, I referred several times to theory. My father was a very smart

man. And as I said, I wasn't young. He wasn't a young man when I was born. We were all together seven children. I was number five in the scheme of things. Neither had a handicapped or a disability of any kind. And I was only 16 when he died.

But I do remember being very, very bitter when I was about 14 years old about my limp. I blamed him. I felt I was-- rebellious. I felt, well, OK. I remember even saying to my parents, you had five children and you didn't need number six. And he sat down on my bed one day. And he said to me, listen. We did everything possible to take care of your hip.

Now, you are sort of holding us hostage with your hip. It went about as far as we can do it. You're only a young lady. You're going to listen. You're going to listen good. He took me in the front of a mirror in my bedroom. And he said, you look into that mirror. You have beautiful red hair. You've got a freckled face. You've got a very strong, intelligent mind. And you've got a bad hip.

Now, you have only two choices. You can stay in this room, blame us, blame the world, bemoan your hip, or you can brush the beautiful red hair, wash your face, and start using your God-given good mind.

From that day on, he made me, for a very short period, for just about two years, because I was 16 when he died, he had many business interests. When he brought me out of that bedroom, he got me so involved in his business life, and taught me bookkeeping-- he didn't-- he was not a bookkeeper. But he made sure that I was.

My father was a very smart man, but an uneducated man. So if I-- he made me a survivor. And by this point, I don't mean a Holocaust survivor. I had many adversities since. Five years-- America was good to me. I have a very well-educated, fine young man, a son, worked hard to get his education, never asked for any outside assistance because I was raised where things were given and not asked for, did with an awful lot, but wouldn't reach out to ask for anything.

But when it comes back to me, when you ask me why I survived, I've talked about that before to my family. The talk my father had with me when I was 13 and a half or 14, you make a life on your head or on your hip. I think he was the one that made me survive. Life is worth living. I build a life not around a bad hip, but on a strong mind. And I think that's why I survived.

When you came to America, to Cleveland, what were your plans for the future? And how and when did you get married? And did you marry a survivor?

I met-- I married a survivor. I had opportunities to marry in Europe. But I felt my sister made a mistake. She is going to give up her precious America. I wanted-- I had one strong goal, is to come to America and start all over again after the war. Now, chances are had I met-- I had opportunities to be married, which was difficult because a lot of women-- a lot more women survived than men.

Had I probably fallen in love like my sister is-- again, I ruled with my head. My sister went with her heart. She fell in love with a young man. And she figured, whatever fate will lead her with him. She is going to go. I wasn't in love with anybody. And my head told me that I want to come to America and start all over again. So I came here.

I first worked. Again, I was very independent to the point of stubborn in spirit. I did not want handouts. Even though my brother offered me an opportunity for-- to again, my family counted on my strong mind. My brother, Saul, said, look, you're going to take two years of the high college. And you're going to be able to become a bookkeeper or whatever-- a secretary, whatever. And he was willing to support me through the time of this.

For better or worse, for stubborn, for family reasons, for his teenage children being jealous, whatever the reason might have been, I decided against it. Again, with my very bad hip, the only job available was a selling job in a bakery. I started selling bread in a bakery, standing in a bakery for eight hours a day on a bad hip. Worked there for a few weeks because I did not want to be supported. I wanted to be on my own.

I lived with my sister, Lily, the other sister who was married here. Then a friend found me a job, a sit-down job in a necktie factory, M & D Simons on West 6th Street, where I was packing necktie. It was like a liberation because I was

sitting down. I was working and sitting down. Started making better money then because it was a union shop.

I met my husband, who was a friend of my brother-in-law's. And we were married. I worked at M & D Simons until I was six months pregnant. I had a beautiful baby boy. My hip gave out when he was a year and a half old and I had my first American operation. Recovered. My child wasn't quite eight years old. My husband had a hard time making a living. And I wanted to help out.

I went to the May Company and applied for a Christmas job. I wanted something badly. We couldn't afford it. And I figured out that if I worked between Thanksgiving and Christmas, I'd get a 10% discount. I'm going to get it. I became American. I wanted pretty things. My child wasn't quite eight years old.

My husband said, how will you manage? There isn't a mother. How will you manage? He had a night job. I had a day job. We managed. When they let the Christmas help go, and they asked me to stay, and I wanted to go for the job, my husband said, that's-- how can you? I said to myself, you must do something, right? He touched my ego.

Stayed with the May Company, got into management position, prospered with the May Company, got into management. I was a department manager. It helped. It helped. My earnings with-- I had several operations. The May Company always stood by me.

My working at the May Company helped me get-- my son was a bright young man. My working for the May Company helped us get him the fine school he deserved. He got into Boston University. He has a BA degree in political science from Boston University. He has a master's in journalism from Columbia University. He works for UPI based out of Boston.

United Press International.

United Press International. Just July 15, he was promoted to the-- it was his goal. He wished very much since he got with United Press, this was his next step-- he wanted very badly to get into the state house. Thank god, on June 15, he was promoted to the state house as the United Press representative.

Life is on an even keel. My hips are not painful anymore. But my arthritis is working its way down to the toes. I am 61 years old. I lived a very full life. I'm glad to be in America. I feel I've learned from every experience I did. Every experience I had was a constructive one.

And it all brings me right back to a very smart father, who literally put me on my head instead of telling me, don't limp on a bad hip. Use your God-given abilities in your head. And I feel that that's what made me survive.

I have a modest, lovely home in University Heights. I like to garden. I am an active member of B'nai B'rith Women, very much interested in Anti-Defamation League, antisemitism, doing everything possible, hoping everything possible that what I experienced will never happen to mine. And I pray, pray for-- to God for America and for the Jews that never, never, never again will something like this happen.

I want to ask you, first, for your husband's name, and tell us what he does, and your son's name.

My husband is Jack Berger. He is a knitter with Dalton Industries.

Dalton?

Dalton Industries in Willoughby. He is a cashmere expert. His specialty is cashmere.

Dalton is a sportswear manufacturer.

Sports, yes.

And the May Company you were talking about is the department store?

I worked for the department store. And my husband worked for Dalton Industries.

Now, Jack is also a survivor. Jack is also a survivor. He was married before. And he lost his family. He had a wife and three children. He is a survivor who lost a wife and three children in Europe. And I'm his second wife. And my son's name is Jerry. He's married to a lovely, lovely girl from Long Island. And her name is Fran. She's a college professor.

How do your Holocaust experiences affect you now? Are you talking more about them? And if so, why?

Until the experience, until this effort by the Council of Jewish Women came to my attention, I felt very integrated into being in American community. I didn't-- my personal friends are not necessarily just survivors. I did not stay within. I did not-- I don't know how to say this without coming-- without coming out not the way I mean it.

One of my conscience efforts to be integrated into the American community was not to speak Hungarian if I can speak English, not to just associate myself with European-born people. I wanted very much to be part of the American Jewish community. And I hope I am. My friends are American-born women, European-born women. And I don't-- I never felt enclosed, that I'm different. I'll probably very-- I'll be very shocked when I'll hear my voice coming off of this tape.

Now, it's 40 years after these experiences. Do you find that you're more open about discussing them?

I'm open about it. I trailed off. When I became aware of the effort of the Council of Jewish Women's effort, and especially while I was working, I did not have much time for organizational work. I had a full-time job. I had to raise a child, there was no time. But when I stopped working, and I became active, I chose to be active in the B'nai B'rith Women.

There are so many worthwhile organizations to be active in-- Hadassah, ORT, whatever. The reason I chose B'nai B'rith is because it is not strictly a Zionist organization. It's an American service organization. B'nai B'rith Women's interests are so varied.

Yes, we love Israel. Yes, we have an Israeli project. There is a children's home in Jerusalem, which is solely for disturbed children for the last 35 years, solely supported by B'nai B'rith Women of America. But of B'nai B'rith Women's active participation in the Anti-Defamation League and not just Jewish persecution, B'nai B'rith it gets involved in any discrimination-- for a minute the word escaped me.

Anybody that is discriminated, it B'nai B'rith-- it becomes the Anti-Defamation League's business. It's not just the Jewish discrimination. There was part of the fact that made me come out to volunteer for this interview. Because in the past 35 years, had I not become active in the B'nai B'rith in society, I would not have volunteered for this interview. I don't know whether I'm making any sense out of this.

Do you think that you were shielding your family, your son?

Primarily, that was the thing. I know for a fact that I didn't want him to do without. Because I did. And I say, as a child-- I probably had a much easier childhood than my son had, simply because I was born to parents with money. He didn't. But he was a bright child. And I know one thing for sure-- I was hungry for an education. The opportunities were there. Fate was against it.

My parents had the means. My father convinced me I had the brains. But Hitler interrupted my education. I wound up selling bread. I wound up packing neckties. I wound up-- my first job with the May Company was accounts receivable, credit office work. Later on, I was a department manager. When I finished my so-called career with the May Company, I was a commissioned saleswoman selling carpeting.

So I found out I have abilities. My father was right. The bad hip was not the most important part of me. God gave me a little slower body, but he gave me a very active strong mind. And I put it to use. And I think that's the key to my



survival.

Now, your sister who went through Auschwitz with you and most every other place survived. You survived together. You're both in Cleveland. But you tell us that she would not want to recite any of her history on this archive.

When I told her that I volunteered for this interview, she said, I give you an awful lot of credit. But I couldn't expose myself to it. She saw me just before. She was over the house just before I came here. And I started telling her after I talked to you Friday that I have mixed emotions, that I let myself into something that I shouldn't have.

Will I come across constructively? Will I come across intelligently? I mean, I had all of those questions prior to this interview. Now that we're coming to a close of it, I hope I will have no regrets. I hope I came across objectively. I hope I told my story, the way it has to be told for the future, if you will.

I would like you to tell our audience, our listeners in future years about the group of you that went from this little town in Czechoslovakia on the transport and came back to the same place, and how many of you are in Cleveland, and what you're each doing.

We were seven girls on the same transport and through all the camps I mentioned together. We lost track of some of them, as everybody went their own way. There are, besides my sister-- there are three others here. One of them is Celia Simon. One of them is her niece. This was an aunt and a niece, Edith Simon. And one of them who was with me on this small group from the engineer, her name is Marsha Deutsch. This is one girl that I mentioned that we worked with an engineer, three or four of us. One of them is in Israeli, a lot of that group. She survived too. So we are five of us in Cleveland.

Five from the same town in Czechoslovakia, from the same camps.

Yeah, from the same ghetto, from the same childhood until to this day in Cleveland. And my sister-- there is five of us that are here. We like each other a lot. But we-- I wouldn't say that we're personal friends. They have their social life. I have mine. We're together during joy. We're together during sorrow. We are bound together by a common bond. But we didn't cling to each other as that OK, we're going to be friends forever, and ever, and ever just because we survived together. They live their lives. I live mine. And of course, with my younger sister, I'm very, very close.

Do you think that survivors have a message that others need to understand?

Yes. And I think I said it earlier in this interview. If there is a message, I mentioned it, that we see, I remember from my own experience, where I heard that the first bearded Jew was pulled-- his beard was pulled. The consensus was he knew the situation has changed. Things are bad. He probably should not have been there. This was the general opinion-- if he would not have been there, nobody would have pulled his beard. And if I'm going to not going to be in the wrong places, nobody's going to hurt me.

And if I want to leave any-- if I can leave any message at all, it would be, if one of us is hit-- and I'm going to get very specific-- if they hurt one Jew, if the rest of us are not hurting with them, it's a crime. Today, it's me, tomorrow, it's you, the day after, somebody else. We must be involved. We must react.

There is no such a place to be in the wrong place in the United States of America. It's a different America that I came to 35 or 40 years ago. Things have changed-- not necessarily everything for the better. But there is no better place on God's Earth than this United States of America.

So consequently, as a Jew, there is no wrong place to be. As an American citizen, I've got to have a right to be wherever I want to be. And if somebody is hurting you, and I'm not going to try and reach out and see that you're not hurt, or you will not do it for me, then all of this is wasted. Then all of this is wasted.

We're done.

OK.

This is an amazing account that you've shared with us. And we want to thank you very, very much. And I do want to do a little more than shake your hand, I'd like to kiss your cheek.

It's my pleasure.

Thank you.

Thank you very much.