

I'm Sally Weinberg. Today we are interviewing Betty Berliner, a Holocaust survivor. The project is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland section. Betty, I'd like to know a little bit about yourself. Could you tell me how old you are?

Yes, 60.

60 years old. And where do you live?

I live in University Heights, Ohio.

Ohio.

Yes.

Is that a suburb of--

Of Cleveland, Ohio.

--suburb of Cleveland. And do you work?

No, I volunteer my time.

You volunteer Good. And are you married?

Yes.

How long have you been married?

39 years last month.

And does your husband work?

Yes.

And what does he do?

He is a parts man in a auto wrecking place.

Auto wrecking?

Yes.

I see. And do you have children?

Yes. I have three children of my own and a nephew, whom I was lucky enough to have him while we were surviving together.

I see. Tell me about your children. Tell me how old they are and tell me what they do.

My oldest son was born in Germany in the DP camp. He is 37 years old. And he is an architect. He finished Purdue and also went a year longer. And he is a landscape architect.

And where does he live?

He is living in Philadelphia at the moment. He is married, no children. My second son is an attorney with a Cleveland firm. Should I--

You want to tell me their names?

Yes, of course. Banesh Friedland--

No, your son's name.

Oh, my son's? The oldest son is Leo Carl Berliner. My youngest son is Irv Berliner. And he is an attorney. And he's living in Cleveland.

Oh, and what was the firm he's with?

With Banesh Friedland.

OK. That's all right. And you have other children?

Yes. I have a daughter who is finishing law school in Northwestern. This May 19th, she's going to be finished.

And what is her name?

Her name is Sherry Ann Berliner.

And she's not married?

She is not married. She's only 23 years old.

So how many grandchildren do you have?

One, so far only one.

And what is that child's name?

His name is Jonathan, Jonathan Abraham Berliner. I do have two from my nephew older children. But this is a bit-- I'm not their grandmother.

I see. Let's go back a ways in your life and tell us what your life was like before the war. Where did you live?

I live in Poland.

In what city?

It was Lancut.

Could you spell that for me?

L-A-N-S-U-T.

L-A-N-S-U-T.

C-U-T, Lancut.

S-C-U-T?

Yeah.

And what larger city was that near, any?

It was near Rzeszów, near Kraków. It was in Galicia, what we call at that time-- I mean, now, more than that time. It was Poland.

Poland.

Yeah.

OK. And what was your name then?

My name then was Berta-- B-E-R-T-A.

And your last name?

Gurfein-- G-U-R-F-E-I-N.

I see. And what was your town like? Can you describe it to me?

Yes, of course. It was-- first of all, I was one of seven children to very religious parents. My father was an extremely, extremely intelligent, learned person. And I guess what we-- what remained with us is the remnants what we had a chance, as young children, to learn a little bit the ways, the means, how to be a human being, and so on. This was all done at home, but for a very short time. And the town was a happy town.

Were you living in an area of all Jewish people?

No, no. I never lived in an area of all Jewish people. In fact, during the summer, I was among the least Jewish people. We were always very-- how should I say it? Yes, we spoke Yiddish. We were very religious. But this had nothing to do with our surroundings.

Did you speak Polish also?

Very-- only.

Polish and Yiddish?

Of course. This was normal. This-- when I turned to my mother, I spoke Yiddish. When I turned away, I spoke Polish. This was always a normal thing to do. And I was one of the-- not the youngest, but the next to the youngest, born after World War I.

Of the seven children, you were the number six?

Six, right. And this was after my father returned from war prison in Russia, and when Poland was Poland, after he came back. And I guess my mother had a miscarriage in between. But when I was born, it was already in '24, and life was normal, as far as I can remember.

What did your father do for a living?

We had a store.

What kind of store?

Well, it was like a store that we had mainly machinery. We had all kind of machine, beginning with sewing machines to big farm machinery, everything. It was like a store, like a country store. We had everything-- groceries.

And did you work in the store?

Very little, yes, before Christmas, and when my father-- when the people used to come to unload things, I usually loved to be there, and check, and see if everything is in order. My father allowed me to do it because it was no effort for me to do it. Because there were others that didn't want to do it.

Tell me, of the seven children, how many brothers and how many sisters?

I had two brothers. And we were five sisters. Of them, I and my sister survived.

And where was your sister in line of the children?

The youngest. She was young.

So the two youngest survived.

Right. She was the youngest one. And did your brothers work in the store?

Oh, yes, my brothers were-- one of my brothers went to Argentina in the late '20s so that I hardly knew him. But he went away because it was time where he was to be induct-- I guess, to go to the army wasn't exactly the thing to do.

In the Polish Army?

Yes.

And he didn't want to?

No, because there were no-- you couldn't keep kosher. You just had to do what everybody else did. There were no-- so I guess it was a little bit too much. So he went away. There was an occasion that he could go to Argentina. He wanted to go, I mean, to see the world. And that's where he wind up to be. That's how he lived. However, he is dead now. But he lived in Argentina during the war. And I saw him once. He was here when my son was bar mitzvahed. And then I was in Buenos Aires to see him. But this was already an occasion that he was very ill.

Would you say that your family was in a good financial status?

Normal, yes, good. Everybody-- it was a different type of living than here. It was wonderful. Everybody was happy. Everybody did what he wanted to do, what he could do. We went to school. And my older sisters were married.

Did you go to a Jewish school or the Polish?

No, I went to elementary. However, I did go afterwards. I went to a Hebrew school.

You went to the Polish day school?

Oh, yes, normal elementary school.

And at what point did you go to the Hebrew school?

In the afternoon.

Oh, in the afternoon.

Afterwards, yes.

After regular school, you went to the Hebrew school.

Right. We also had religion in Polish. We had a Jewish religion teacher that taught us religion in Polish.

In the Polish school, you mean?

Yes. Yeah, like the Catholics went in with a priest, we had a teacher. So the children were together. And in fact, if I want to quote, first, I have to remember what I know in Polish. And then I have to interpret it.

I see. And did you notice any antisemitism at that time in your village, in your town?

Great, great. The stores were picketed already by the young people, terrible.

When was this? At what point?

This was in 1938, 1937. You know it was--

But before that.

Before this, I couldn't see it. I couldn't see it because I was too young to realize what was going on. But then in--

How old were you in 1937? How old were you?

I was 13. At that time, I was in school. And I have friends, Jewish and non-Jewish. It-- a child like this is not exactly geared to see. It was no war. It was everything normal. But yes, the antisemitism lurked very, very much there.

Well, what was a typical day for your family?

In the morning, my father would go to say his prayers. And the store would be open. And maybe my mother or somebody older would go in to open the store. And breakfast was served. And then we would run off to school and come back by 1 o'clock to eat-- I mean, the big meal was always at noon. And everybody was sitting at the table, eating, talking, laughing, joking, telling the stories. And then everybody would go to his corner and do homework.

Did you have a large home for that many?

Yes, we had a large home. And we had lots of books. I mean, we were surrounded with books wherever we went and always people in the house. We had an open door. My father would have his people that he would sit, and learn, and discuss things.

This-- when you say learn, was this the Talmud? Is that what they were studying?

Yes, yes. There is all-- there are always discussions. I don't know if you know, but this is a never-ending process. So in the morning when he was there, and he would say something, or somebody would say, and he wouldn't agree, they would come home, and start taking off the books from the shelves, and sit, and see what's going on until somebody called, somebody needs you outside. So he would excuse himself, go to the store, and be there. And sometimes, the person would wait, or go home, and come later. But it was always-- we were always with a lot of people at home.

Sort of a social center was in your house.

A social center-- I met a cousin whom I didn't see for probably 45 years. And he saw me, his life-- because he is alive now, and the success was because he always was near my father. And my father would tell him not to sit where he is, to do whatever he has to do not to, just take that small end, but look for wider horizons. And that's how he survived.

And how about the Jewish holidays? Did you have large celebrations?

Very much so. Each holiday was a very, very much-- I mean, religiously, naturally, and socially too. The kids would come. And because we were so easy, this was the time still. And now, I realize that a lot of children were much more restricted than we were. So it was-- they loved to be because we weren't so-- oh, the father works and the mother. But we were easy.

Relaxed.

Very much so. Or we would sit and ask my father to tell us-- I probably know the map of Russia better than some people that sit and learn geography of Russia because my father always tells us the five years he spent in Russia during the war, every place he was, what he saw, how he-- the life in Russia, how he as a prisoner could walk on the sidewalks.

The Russian soldier had to walk on the road. He couldn't step on the sidewalk in the tsar's time. And then he was there when the revolution broke out. So really, we had firsthand. And being what he was, he always wanted to see what's-- what is, how it is done. And he was all the way up. They send him-- send, I guess, many all the way where-- like Chukchi and Kamchatka, the northernmost point of Russia.

I see. And did Zionism play any role in your lives?

Very much so, yes.

Your parents were interested in Palestine?

My father, mainly. And I as a child belonged to a religious organization, but just the same, yes. We-- in fact, my aunt-- my mother's sister-- was already in Israel, at that time in Palestine. So we were very much aware of what's going on and always very much attuned to it.

To Israel, or at that time, Palestine.

Yes. Palestine, yes.

Did your family belong to any other community organizations?

No. It was-- it was the temple. It was the Jewish community.

The synagogue was the center.

The center as far as Jewish, yes.

An Orthodox synagogue?

Yes. My father had a pin that Herzl pinned into his lapel when he went to one of his-- when he was in Poland, and one of the very religious leaders of the community went to see him, he took my father-- at that time he was a child. And up to the war, we had that pin that Herzl pinned into my father's lapel.

Herzl?

Yeah, he himself.

Oh, Herzl pin-- put the pin in it?

That's right. Because he was the youngest, probably, and religious. And the way he looked, he said, that was a rare occasion to see children like this to want to see him.

Were there any theaters or concert halls in your neighborhood?

Oh, yes. It was not-- we-- in fact, my sisters belonged to a theater group. They performed. It was-- I don't know how to say it. It was a different type of living. It was togetherness, especially in the Jewish community. We were a community within a community, as far as social life. It was mostly in the Jewish-- within the Jewish community, so belonged to all kind of what I say.

And did your family ever go on vacations?

Well, yes.

Where did they go?

My sisters would go to Zakopane. This was in the mountains on the big-- and to different cities where we had families. Or we really had more-- also, the vacation was the big thing. We were in a village in-- during the summer, walking around barefoot, and being in the fields and in the woods.

Did your grandparents live in your village?

No. My grandparents lived in the city. But I did not know my grandparents. Oh, my father was one of the youngest. And my grandfather was an old man. And I never knew.

From your mother's side either?

No, from my mother's side, I remember Grandma just sitting in bed. But it's like a shadow, like you think you remember something. That was all. But my mother--

Did you have cousins, and aunts, and uncles in the same town?

Yes, very much so.

What, your father's side?

No, mostly from my mother's side. My father was-- had a only brother. And he was living far away. So actually, I saw my uncle only once. But my mother's side, sisters, and she had two brothers who were here in the United States at that time already.

And what was her maiden name?

Taubenfeld. And so she had sisters. And they had children. And of course, it was a very close relationship. Specifically on holidays, we were always together.

Now, let's talk about you personally at that time. Were you a healthy child?

Very much so, yes. I mean, we were really-- my father-- summertime, he would wake up early in the morning and wake us up. He says, you can't stay in bed. The trees, the flowers smell so beautifully. It's a crime to be here. The hay is freshly cut. And everything smells like the most beautiful perfume. You better come out. And let's go for a walk. I used to be near the woods when the sun started just to go up. And I guess I love the country life. And it remained with me. I love to be in the country. That's why my--

Did you have any-- I'm sorry, I interrupted you.

That's why my son, my oldest son said, my mother's love for the flowers and everything, I inherited. And that's why he is in what he is, the landscape architect.

How nice. And did you have any special hobbies or talents? Was there any special interest that you had?

Oh, yeah. I still have something. I would do a lot of needlepoint, cross-stitches. I had a teacher who was Ukraine. And she-- it was her interest to teach me how to do it without any design. I just looked at the design and made it on the materials. And everything-- reading-- I used to get lost. I wouldn't know where I am. I was sitting on the attic reading until it got dark. And I didn't realize that I spent the day reading.

I see. And did you have any plans for the future? Did you have any big plans?

Oh, my, yes. We had plans to go to school. And it was my father-- because besides being-- my father was also a druggist. So that was his aim, that I should be-- go into-- it's clean. It's for a girl, just the right thing to be always dressed neatly and clean and be surrounded in clean places to go into pharmacy. And well, that was then.

And were you aware of any antisemitism by 1939? You started to tell me some incidents.

Yes. It was already-- the better Jewish stores would be picketed by young people, by the students, mainly. And it-- the air was filled with something, like it's hard to describe. It was like everything. I would walk out. And all of a sudden, I would be aware, there is something. Somebody looks at me. Somebody follows me, maybe.

It wasn't only the talk at home that was sort-- and besides, in 1939, we were already aware what's going on in Germany because a city in Poland was chosen for the people that had to leave Germany. I mean, they were originally born in Poland. And then Hitler made them to evacuate. And then one of our friends went there. And when he came back, he says, I don't believe it because he had a factory with-- he made blankets. And that's what he took.

And he said, I don't believe it. But you never saw anything like people that were so rich and everything, they came. They don't have what to wear. They came with a suitcase, whatever they could carry. And it's unreal. So we were already aware of what's going on.

However, according to my father's belief, he always said, I was in Russia. I know what the Russians can do. The Germans cannot be that bad. And this is what kept us where we were. We never ran away. I mean, we were on the way. But they wouldn't let us go when they threw us out from our house. And he really didn't want to go. He didn't believe that we can find refuge with the Russians. And that was his main objective. And nobody-- I mean, we never--

His main objective was what?

Against-- not to go to the Russians because he didn't believe that we can really be safe there. And he still-- it's Germany, how can we think of Germans to be that brutal? I mean, it was a feeling that nobody can even comprehend.

Well, once the war started, how did this change your life for you and your family? Tell us about it.

When this was on a Friday--

What year would that have been?

1939, September 1.

September 1?



Yes, the war broke out. In the afternoon, the bombs were falling not far away from us because there was a great, big sugar factory, one of the biggest. And it was bombed. I mean, just like that, like from a neighbor would. And we knew. My sister came from the city that she lived, about 18 kilometers from us with the children. And it was unbelievable. And then somebody came to tell us that the Germans are coming. And it was like everything at once. You couldn't believe it. It was overwhelming.

Were all of your sisters and brothers still at home?

No.

One had left for Argentina.

No, nobody was home, only I and my younger sister.

The others were all gone?

Were all someplace, married, children, and some. But it was-- I remember, and I'll never forget it, when I heard, I was outside. And somebody came running, oh, the Germans are coming in. And I felt that my knees completely-- I couldn't move. It was like paralyzed.

And this was-- I mean, it was something that immediately, I realized that this is it. And I came in home. And my father had a short beard. And I looked at him. He says, don't worry, we will try to hide a little bit. But if they come in and they need-- want something, do give him. And don't worry. And my mother was. And we were in the store.

And you were 15 at this point?

Yes. And my-- but the store was closed by then.

When you say the store was closed--

Well, we closed it for the day, just closed the doors. And everybody was whispering something. And everybody was trying to hide something, to put away something, like food in the basement and all kinds of things. And it was panic. It was such an unbelievable panic that my heart pounded probably more than I ever had in my entire life, very frightened.

I mean, this was-- that's one thing that when it comes to something like this, I remember Cleveland when it was-- what was it, in '68 when the-- on-- where was it-- on this-- it was some-- between the Blacks and the white. I almost had a-- I mean, this is something that I cannot really-- I am scared of civil disobedience. I mean, everything that's civil war to me, I think is-- would kill me. I am terrified of it.

So what followed that day?

That day what followed? Nothing. I mean, we were safe, sort of. It was Friday night, naturally, the ritual, Friday night. It wasn't the normal Friday night. But we ate. And then they were whispering not to go to temple, I mean, not to really be there.

Who was they?

The neighbors, everybody talked, let's not-- let's gather maybe in a private home, someplace that they don't know, and not to antagonize. Not to-- and then came the decrees of the German might. You can't have a store. You shouldn't be together two, three people together. You should remain at home. And then what we have to do? The men have to come out because there is work to be done. And while they gathered the men, they shot two of them, very prominent people. And they--

Are you talking about the Germans?

Yeah. And they told the others to dig the ditches. And they're going to bury them right in the middle of town. And I mean, the shock waves started in an unbelievable way. And this was just-- I guess they-- wherever they came in first, they did it because they knew what it means to the Jewish population to kill somebody in cold blood, to watch this. And it was-- from then on, it was just panic, panic, and pain. And you couldn't walk any-- outside the limits of the city.

Were you aware of what happened to the rest of your family, your brothers and sisters?

Well, you see, we were still children. And we would walk. We would dress up and walk 18 kilometers to see my sister. And then we made sure that the message got to them. And they would come home to be with us. Both my sisters, from either side, came home. And they were-- we were all together. I mean, it was-- but who cared what it was? Wherever we could, we slept, and we were all together.

In your house?

In our house, yeah. And well, this wasn't our original house. But it was the house that-- where we were living all summer long. So it wasn't the village where the people didn't know much. You see, it wasn't television. Or even radios, they didn't have.

So by the time the news traveled to a village, it was either from church or somebody read the newspaper, if they had. And it was sort of like away from the mainstream. But when we-- we had to know what was going on. We couldn't be surprised. So we would-- girls at that time-- it was fall. And it was a terrible winter. It was terrible.

That was the fall of 1939?

1939, '40. It was unbelievable. And then we started to see people coming from the other part of Poland that was near the border of Germany. They were completely thrown out from their homes and evacuated to this part because we were very close to the Russian border. So they would send them on this side. And they would make judenfrei, which means free of Jews, and occupy. They would annex this to Germany. This was like Poznan, Kalisz. Those cities were completely--

Could you spell those cities for me?

Yes.

Posen?

Poznan-- P-O-Z-N-A-N.

And the other one?

Kalisz-- K-A-L-I-S-Z. My husband comes from there. And they were the-- three or four weeks after the war started, they were thrown out from their home. Only they could take what they could. And they put them in the trains and put them here, to this part of Poland, to a ghetto, of course.

But what happened to you, personally, as the Nazis entered your area?

To me, I think that I got old within one night. The fear for my father, for my-- my brother went away. My father would send him away. He says, you're young. You-- go. And he would go away. And as, later on, we knew, he was on the Russian sector, where the Russian army stopped by the San River. We were maybe 20 kilometers away from that part of.

So he went across, where the border wasn't border yet. And he stopped in a city over there, about 50 miles from that part. And he was through the war. And then the Germans walked in. He did not go deep into Russia. And he was killed

there. So I mean, this was something that-- in between-- I mean, this was 1940 already-- my father decided, maybe we should go. And the borders were still open.

The borders to Russia?

To Russia, to the Russian part of Poland.

Were you no longer going to school by this point?

No. I was not allowed to go to school. We were not allowed to have any schools, including the Hebrew schools, the Jewish schools. We were not allowed to see three, four people, young people together.

Was the store closed?

Oh, yes. The store was closed. Everything was taken out from the store.

Was there any money coming in?

None, none, nothing-- what they took, nothing.

And how did you get food?

Well, this is the part. We did prepare food when we could in the beginning. However, we always had-- I guess this part of us, that we would have dollars in dollars stashed away, the real dollar, and jewels, and furs, and what have you, and silver. But this wasn't the part. We still-- my sister had a big store materials.

Fabrics?

Fabrics, beautiful ones, good ones. And when this came, my brother-in-law was very alert. And he would leave just very few pieces. And he would just disperse them among his friends-- I mean, non-Jews. Leave it there, take it. Take this. And when I need it, you're going to give it to me.

And in the beginning, that was the case. So we had means of-- and everything was-- there was no food. Everything was on the black market. You had-- nobody wanted the money. You had to exchange things for things, for food. So as long you had and you could-- and luckily, we were not in a ghetto until 1942, July 29, that they started to take us into a ghetto.

So you remained in that city--

In that village.

--in the village of?

Until 19--

What's the name of the village?

Raczyna.

And how do you spell that?

R-A-C-Z-Y-N-A. Sounds like Racine, huh? Anyway, so we were luckily. Because there were very few Jews there, very few. Of course, my family was there. The sisters were there. But it was far away. It wasn't a point that-- in fact, when the Germans built barracks there-- because it wasn't too far away from the Russians. So they started to build barracks for

the army.

So they needed somebody to-- glass to put in the windows. And my father went in to the commander. The army was not the Gestapo or the SS. Those were normal people, people that hated them not much less than we did. So he went in. And he said that he would-- somebody put it in. And they all-- when the frost came, they didn't put them in right. And they all burst. They didn't have glass. And the soldiers were cold.

So my father went in. And he said, would you care to let me do it? And I promise you that. Sure. So this also relieved my father not to go to work on the roads because it was a terrible winter. The snows-- we didn't have equipment to clean roads or anything like this. So the people did it. And while he was doing the windows, he was inside. And they would give him bread. And they would give him coal to take home. In fact, they would bring it to our house. So it was--

These are the German soldiers?

Yes, yes. And he was saved from not-- and the whole family was sort of safe not to go to work on the roads or whatever they needed.

For two years?

For two winters, we had it like this, until in May 1942. This was shortly before we didn't realize that they are going to fight the Russians. But yes, we realized because there was an unbelievable influx of German Army and--

Into this town?

--into this town-- all over. The whole region was full of them. And also, they would catch young people. And they were looking for-- it was something that it wasn't normal, even for them. So we knew that something is going to come out. But we couldn't communicate with anybody anyway. We couldn't say to anybody or ask any questions.

If my father, while he was working there, he would-- they would have newspapers-- and of course, it was German propaganda because it was for them. But still, he could read. And some-- they told him, read it here. Don't take it home, please. Because we would be punished for it.

So he would see what's going on in the world. But we had no knowledge of anything, except if somebody-- at that time, people from the city would come, just plain beg for bread or for something because they were hungry, especially the people that were thrown out from their homes and were strangers in there.

And were these all Jewish people?

All Jewish people, all.

Were they-- were you designated in some way that you were Jews? Did you have to wear anything?

Oh, yes. Oh, well, then came in 1940, came out that we have to wear yellow stars, the Star of David, yellow on a white. To be honest, we had them all. But I went a time, I would put a big shawl over me. Although I was the only one that looked more Jewish than any of my family because my family were blond with blue eyes-- my mother and my sisters. And my sister-- in fact, my daughter is also. I have two children with blue eyes. And neither of us have blue eyes.

So it's-- so we could be dressed up sort of like the Poles. But I had more-- my sister was more afraid than I was. Otherwise, she would have survived entirely different, my-- the mother of my nephew. She looked exactly like a Polish girl, with the blonde hair, with the blue eyes, and the tiny nose, and the rosy cheeks, and everything. But she was terribly scared. And of course, being a mother of three wasn't such an easy choice.

She had three children?

Three children-- two sons and a daughter. And so this was one part. So we can sort of get away. But I remember, one day, I was outside, and a soldier, a German soldier passed by. And he just passing by said, the Gestapo is here. And I realized that he saw me with-- that I was just around the house without any. So I went in. And I-- naturally, I told everybody. And right away, my mother, and my father, and my brother-in-laws would put on the arm band to make sure that we are not exposed without them.

What would happen if you didn't wear them.

It depends who passed by. There were no laws specific. They could shoot you just like that. They can take you to jail, hit you so that-- I mean, from-- this was something that it's hard to-- depends on day and the people.

Are you're talking about the German soldiers did this?

No, no, I'm talking about the Gestapo. The German soldier had nothing to do with the civilians. They were people that left their homes and their families and were bitter while they have to. And they were afraid because, I suppose, they did know that probably, the inevitable is coming, the war with Russia.

So the German soldiers were somewhat friendly?

Oh, entirely different. I remember, one of them brought-- my sister had a gorgeous little girl. She was about-- she was born in our house. She was two years old. And he brought from his daughter beautiful dresses for her. I mean--

Betty, we were discussing when the Gestapo came to your town. That was in 1942 in May.

Yes. In May when they came, we didn't know. This was very early in the morning. I remember, my father was praying in the house. And they walked in. And they took him away.

They walked into your house?

To our house. And they took my-- my brother-in-laws were hiding. I mean, they weren't visible. And they just took my father. And they took 11 other men from there. And they took him away. It was a cold May morning, I remember. And when they took my father, I just got dressed barely and barefoot. I ran after the-- because it wasn't a car, even. They took a horse and buggy.

And they took my father there to a point, where-- the city hall. And they put him all on a car. And they took him to the nearest city to jail. So that's what they said. And I was running through the fields. I knew the road.

And I was there. And I came. They put my father to jail with others. And that's-- this was-- they used to catch wherever they would go through. It was like a fire. Wherever, there was ashes all over. Which city or village they would go in, they would first ask for Jews and just catch them on the street, walk into the house, just take them. And nobody knew where and why. And they took my father that time. I came running.

And I stood on the-- we had-- the jail is always surrounded with a wall. And I crawled on the wall. And I saw my father. And he begged me. He said, please, I don't want to see you shot. Please, go back to your mother. I'm safe. Don't worry. And by-- there was the doctor also. But he said, believe me, the doctor will take me as his assistant if need to be. And I'm going to be safe.

So you were able to talk to him over the wall.

Just that was a split second. And he says, please, jump down before they catch you. So I did. And I went back home-- I mean, not right away. But I did go back to my mother. And I came back. The next morning, we went again. And they-- at night, they took him out. And they took him to Treblinka. They took him to-- because they got already many, many. The jail couldn't keep that many.

Where was Treblinka?

In Poland.

I mean did they take him by train?

By train. They loaded the trains. I mean, they took them in buses to the train. And that's where they were last seen. And that was it. Until-- we were still home until July 29. This was at 2 o'clock in the morning. They surrounded our houses. And they-- whoever moved, they shot him. They came with big trucks. And they loaded everybody to the trucks.

Who was still home with you?

My mother, and my sister, and the one sister with two children, and my brother-in-law, and my older sister, who a priest made her papers. He gave her a birth certificate and everything, she should go away. But she was with my other sister.

And she said, I cannot leave me and my mother alone. She says, I have to be with them. So she came home. And she was on the truck with me. She threw me out from the truck. She says-- because we stood on the edge. And she says, you have to jump. I said, what do you mean? She said, there is no other way. We have to live. Maybe we can help them. And she threw me out sort of from the truck.

But this was later.

This was the 29th of August, later, after my father wasn't home already.

OK. I think we'll take a break right now. And we'll come back. And you'll tell us your story--

Right, OK.

--from how you left the truck with your family.

Right.