

Continuing with the interviewing of Mr. Henry Billys, Mrs. Sophie Billys, and their daughter Millie Korman. This session is part of the Holocaust Videotape Project of the National Council of Jewish Women.

Mr. Billys, you were telling how you got to Krakow. What do you remember from those days that you had a chance to observe, and what thoughts did you have about what was going on at that time?

This was 1942. And I was working in the telephone company, telegraph and telephone, with all gentiles, of course. And they were-- I never myself personally experienced any antisemitism in my life.

However, I was sitting. We were working together. And next to me was sitting an engineer, the brother of the Minister of Communication in Poland. Albin Bobrowski was his name.

And one morning he came. He said, Henry I am sick. I had a friend. We grew up together. We went to grade school, to high school, and to university. And he became a doctor and I became an engineer.

Last night he came with his wife. He said, we got an order to leave town. We have to leave our house. And they brought some jewelry and furs to leave with that gentile man. He said, if we survive, you will give it back to us. If we don't, it will be yours. At least I know I will give it to a friend.

And he said, myself and my wife, we couldn't sleep all night long. We were crying like little kids. Very nice. Then we started talking about what is happening to those Jews. And the same man, it was maybe two hours later, the same man. He was an older guy. He was at the time, he was in the 60s.

He said, you know Henry, one thing history will tell about Hitler, that he cleaned up the world from Jews. It was a good deed, the same man.

I will never forget that because he was crying all night long. So he had that certain Jew, he was precious to him. But all the Jews exterminated, that's fine. This is one observation which was all the time on my mind. And this was also true to the Germans.

Our supervisor was a Viennese German, in Vienna, a Nazi. And when we have seen those transports going down, we could see through the window. His remark was, Herr Billystok, look at that, another transport to heaven, sarcastically to heaven. That's what-- actually it was that way.

In other words, everybody knew what's going on. Everybody knew what's going on. And it is very hard to believe and to comprehend that today to that in the 20th century in a nation like Germany, which was high cultured and the love for music, for literature, for everything-- they could accept that all this could happen, that this could happen.

And that's why I think what we are doing right now, I was avoiding that. Because I was approached many times to do something, to give some information. But it comes to a point where people start denying of existence of the Holocaust altogether, that such things didn't exist, didn't happen.

And here are people who lived through that, and have seen that, and can testify that. My testimony is what I did, not somebody told me, what I've seen, what I heard from these people saying. They claim that this does not exist. And when we are gone, they can keep on claiming that.

What do you remember about what you knew about what's happening to your family at that time?

I did not know what happened to my family. I did not know. My brother was with me. He was not working. And he was like in hiding.

But he survived. He came to the States with us. I knew from persons people are being sent out from Lodz. I knew that my parents are still there. After the war, I learned that my parents were taken with one of the last transports to

Auschwitz. And over there they were exterminated.

My sister who was working all the time in the ghetto, she was a year and a half older than I, she was taken by boat to some camp in Germany and that boat sank. And 600 young girls were at that time with that ship. Because Sophie's older sister was in the ghetto all the time. And she survived and she told me all that, because she seen all that. She knows exactly. So that's all I knew about my close parents, my parents and relatives.

What do you remember seeing, thinking in those days, as you were in Krakow, working and trying to raise your kids? Your husband joins you.

Well, in Krakow, we have already good life because, well the living conditions weren't the greatest. We only had one room. And we want to use lavatory, we have to go outside, downstairs.

But we were happy we had this. And once when I was working at the post office, they asked me if I would like to go for three months to work in [NON-ENGLISH]. That was the city where my brother-in-law is from, and where I got the papers for my husband from.

So I agree. And we went there. And it was the same way I could have my child with me. And I had a nice room. And the work was nice.

But the minute we arrive, we see that red sky. That's where they're burning Jews. That's how I first time heard about it. And they start talking more and more about the new mattresses arriving made out of hair, and the soaps on the market made out of fat. And people were just talking in open about it.

But also, I recall some scenes from the beginning of the war while I was still in Warsaw. They were chasing people who were smuggling food.

One day I saw a woman coming with a big tummy. She looks like pregnant. And that the policeman just walks over to her with the big knives. We were scared that they will kill her.

And he was right. She had a big sack with beans under her dress. And after he took the knife on her, all the beans went on the ground.

But what if he will approach a real pregnant woman? He will just kill her and the baby. And they probably did that.

But I started to telling you how we got my sister's little girl out of the ghetto. So I decided to stay in Bochnia with my older sister's two children. And that was in end of 1941, where my parents were still alive. My sister with her husband went there.

And she took my mother's bracelet and put few words, whoever find, please keep the bracelet. And go on this address. And tell to be here exactly at 11:00 with the little girl. We like to take her out from the ghetto.

Luckily, one person find it, and give it to my mother. And at 11 o'clock sharp, she was there with my mother. And my sister yells, where is my father? What happened? In order to go on that place where they were, they had to go through-- they built a bridge where the streetcar goes, but it's like a little stick with this. And my father couldn't make it. So only my mother and sister came over. She could see them and that little girl.

And of course, the wires were. And when they were coming closer to the wire on the side where my sister and my brother-in-law was, a German policeman was walking over. And right away my sister says, oh my ankle. And he said, what happened? What happened? They start talking about.

And in the meantime that friend of ours, the gentile, we used to play together, opened the wire, got the girl out put her in a buggy, and then he give a noise. And my sister says, oh, there is a buggy. Maybe I go in and I will feel better. And that's the way they took the girl out.

And they went to the same church I did. And they got an identical certificate, only they put their name. And they brought her over. She was three. How old was she? Six years older than you. Yes. She was over seven at the time.

So you lived this time in Krakow as Christians for all practical purposes. Were you afraid that you may be discovered? What goes through--

I don't know. I just believe that this-- what I am I am. I wouldn't speak a word of Polish. I was only talking Ukrainian. My daughter didn't even know any other word. Her first words were Ukrainian. And I just believe in that. And no other way we could do it.

We were not converted ever. But living as gentiles you have to act like them and conduct yourself like them. I was going to church every Sunday, every Sunday, and on the holidays. And when it came Christmas time, I was singing the carols with them and everything else.

And Millie went with me once in a while. Sophie never went to church. So there was no suspicion on that part. However, the physical, the looks could dis-mask you. And if I may, I can tell you a story what happened to me.

In 1944, July the 17th, 1944, when Stalingrad was already over and the Germans knew that they are done, so it was already a different air. People felt that it's coming. It's coming to an end.

I happened to be-- this was in July. I happened to be on the Vistula swimming. And we were playing volleyball, a group of telephone and telegraph people, boys and girls. We played volleyball in our swimming trunks. A guy comes to me and asks me. He said, show me your ID.

OK so I went to my pants over there to get out my wallet and my ID which is right here. This is the ID which I had. This is the original ID as an employee for the telephone and telegraph. I was in charge of travel, which is a technical thing, which was every three months it was extended. This was only good for three months in case of something.

I show him this. And I show him other. And the boys and girls, they come around and said, what is happening Henry? What is happening? So that guy said, go away. He's a Jew. They said, what? He is our colleague. He works with us. He's not a Jew.

Go away. He's a Jew. I said, you must be crazy. Well, he said and while I talked to him he opened this. And he was Jewish.

He was an informer, absolutely because the way he opened his mouth I knew right away, he is Jewish. He opens his-- I see here he has a belt, and the buckle is a Hakenkreuz. And he tells me, pull down your trunks.

And I look around. I see three Gestapo men, and the Gestapo car standing over there, that green car, and three Gestapo men in uniforms come down. They surrounded me, all four of them. And they took out the revolvers. And they said pull down your--

So I pulled down my trunks. And he said, I see already you are circumcised. I said, you must be crazy. You are not? No, I never was circumcised. So he examined this. And then said, well, if you're not circumcised, he gave the papers back.

I took those papers and I was as calm as I am now, inspired by something which I don't know what it was. And I came home. I didn't tell my family. It was at night. I was shaking like I had 104 fever. And this was it.

A few days later, those colleagues which I had a very good relationship with the people I worked with. They said to me, you know Henry, this is actually a disgrace to be accused of being Jewish or something like that.

Now they had proved that I am not, if they ever thought of it. You should go up to Personalstelle-- It means to the employment office-- and then tell that whole story.

And somehow I said, it's a good idea. I went up over there. And the Germans-- these were the Germans. And I told the whole story. And they made a report. And they asked who was with you. I said, the other eight people or something. They all came up and they signed it's true. My story was true.

And I thought this is the end of it. No. Several weeks later, I got summoned to the police headquarters in Krakow to come. And the summons came through the Personalstelle, through the personnel office. They gave it to me.

And I again I don't know. I was so brave or stupid, I don't know. I said, I'm going. And I went there. I came over there and I was sitting. They called me in. And they tell me the story, yes.

So they gave me a Bescheinigung, a certificate. It is herewith declared that Henrik Billystok, Aryan background, is of Aryan background, as established by that fact. For \$1 million you couldn't get that, and signed by Governor Frank, stamped with the Hakenkreuz, this here, with all those Hakenkreuzes I have here.

It's the Germans.

This was something it's a miracle, if you believe in miracles. It's not that somebody told. Me this was I experienced that. But the inspiration of that partially was before I went to the doctor to begin with, had the examination I went in Bochnia to a Jewish doctor in the ghetto already.

And I told him that's not me. That's my cousin. He wants to go there and to live as a gentile. And what is if he is being-- if he happens to experience something like that, at that time.

He said, you know what? I'm a doctor. I'm a physician. And if that person has nerve strong enough and deny it and not break down, no doctor can be certain of 100% that the circumcision was performed. Because he said, I examined many, many gentiles and non-gentiles. And that was the only thing is whether or not he can withstand the pressure.

And you know, and this inspired me and every day of my life in those times, until that fact that what happened on the Vistula with that man. I was always thinking of it, if it happens to me. In other words, I build up a resistance to such a thing that I was so quiet, when it happened to me that they were convinced that it's the way I said. So that's what happened to me.

What do you remember?

Well there are many things to remember. You mean, in Krakow?

Right. What was life like? What are the thoughts that you have about what's going on about the world?

Well, I will tell you. One day we went. Somebody mentioned that the Jews are being concentrated on one of the squares. And we went there with Henry on a streetcar. And we saw. I just wouldn't believe it. They were sick people, old people, on stretchers. And people with the little something, they told them to take anything. And they were waiting for a transport.

And the streetcar didn't even stop. And we didn't get off. We went back. About 15, 20 minutes later when we came back, nobody was on that square anymore. And we were crying. And I said, Henry, I said what happened? Do we have a cold?

I just couldn't control myself. No.

Many people tried what we did. And they had better looks as though to say they were tall, blond, blue eyes, and something like that. And when they were confronted with a case like mine, or even less than a case like mine, they broke down. I know of a case where a guy you'd never say that he's Jewish. And it was in Christmas time. He went to a store to buy some gifts.

And a guy came to him and he said, you are Jewish. So he took off his watch. And he said, take the watch. Let me go. He took the watch and he didn't let him go. And that's where--

The mistake was.

I know German very well. My mother language is Polish, of course. And we speak Polish perfect. Otherwise, we couldn't have tried it. Because that guy who approached me, I knew right away he's Jewish because of his accent.

Knowing German, I still didn't want to disclose it, because the Polacks didn't tell that. I was speaking broken German all the time to my supervisors.

I had one technician. His name was Pawel Witwicki, tall with a nose like Kosciusko. And I had a uniform with a [NON-ENGLISH]. And I had the right to go first class train. I had the right to pass the streets 24 hours a day. Curfew, I didn't have to worry about that.

And he came to me. He said Henry, let me have your uniform for a weekend. I have a girlfriend who lives it's 60km away from here. And I can go over there, and I'll bring some eggs and sausage and stuff. And I gave him the uniform. And he was wearing that uniform. And he was bringing back because of that he gave me some eggs, some other things.

One day, there was a problem with one of the telephones. And he came back, and he couldn't fix it. So I said, why didn't you fix it? He said, well, he started telling me what it is. And then came in the German who was right next room to me.

He came and said, he said, Henry, why wasn't it fixed? I said, Witwicki is here with. Witwicki, Pawel, come here. Tell the Oberinspektor Schultz what has happened.

So he told him in German, of course. And while he spoke German, first he put a Jewish word. The German didn't know. I knew. I came home, I said, gee Pawel was Jewish.

The following day I said to him, Pawel, I need that uniform. Because if they catch him and this was not his uniform, he had no right to wear this uniform to begin with. He didn't have the authority. Why? I said, I want to go by train to Bochnia.

So he brought me back to uniform. And this was at the end of '44. And nothing. Then he wanted to again. I said, no, I don't have it. I didn't give it to him anymore. He survived. The war ended and he came and said, I'm Jewish.

I said, Pawel, I know that. Do you remember I took away the uniform a day before I knew that you are Jewish. And that girl, she really was over there, this fiancée, and she came to Krakow. They live in Israel. He's an engineer. He's an engineer. And he works for a telephone company.

We visit them twice. He's very well off. He has a Mercedes Benz he drives. And he has a-- he's a big shot over there in the telephone company, very nice people. So this all happened to me. They survived. But that one Jewish world dis-masked him.

Those years, it took a lot of courage to do what you did, to get the papers and all that.

It's more than courage.

How did you do it?

I just had to do it.

If you face-- if you face things like to be or not to be, or to survival, evidently you get inspired or you get some kind of a will, a zest for life that you can do anything. You can do anything.

OK. I did something else. When Millie was two years old, everybody start talking was she baptized? Was she baptized? I says, well, I wait for my husband to come. He should be here any day.

Well, we didn't wait. I make her a little dress. And we called a priest. And he came over and he baptized her. It didn't mean a thing to us.

But we just have to have a paper. And somehow, I didn't believe in having somebody else's name. I just want our name to remember. And we had it.

We were under our own names.

I mentioned that.

We didn't change the names, only were different religion.

Millie, you were growing up as a kid. Do you have any memories from those days?

It was Maszkowice.

The memories that I had, frankly, I did not know the war was going on until I was a little bit older, because my surroundings were always happy, and I played. I don't even know whether I knew that my father was gone, because those were very young years. But when he came back, I remember we went places, and I was dressed well. I had a little fur, a little coat with a fur collar. And I remember the muff because I put my hands into it. And we took walks. And we had a place in the country.

I remember digging potatoes. I guess everyone who lived in an apartment had a place outside of the city. And we had a little house where you kept equipment and the balls and nets. But I remember digging the potatoes.

Yeah.

We must have had potatoes.

I had a motorcycle and a car.

Yeah.

Do you remember Maszkowice? When I was working at Przemysl, that Maszkowice that priest who gave me the papers, they live very close by. And they invited us. That was my vacation. We spent the whole week there. And they just loved her.

OK. I didn't know what you meant by Maszkowice.

Yeah, yeah.

Being a city girl, I remembered I always had to be dressed in dresses and matching underpants, and my little socks and shoes. And the girls who I played with over there just had a dress and underpants. And they ran around. And I thought, oh, if I could only do that. And I remember that was the happiest part of the vacation is because I could run around like a little farmer's girl.

And I bought her a little Ukrainian dress all embroidered. That's from that time.

Well, she didn't ever suffer any starvation. She had everything what she needed, milk and eggs, and bread. We had it all the time.

So you lived under this new identity. And for all practical purposes, you were part of that environment.

That's right.

What thoughts do you have about what was going on, the war, Hitler, and what you knew about?

Well, we knew from radio what is happening. We knew, for instance, that that boat which arrived here and then they were sent to Cuba, and back to the United States was not accepted, and all those Jews were-- we knew that. We knew that fact. And that Hitler, there were big propaganda. They said the Americans don't want to Jews either. The Cubans don't want the Jews either. We remember that fact.

This impressed me at that time very much because these people were already convicted, once they were sent back. So we knew about what is going on. We knew about the bombardment of things. We knew about that if Hitler would have a little more time to develop in the fjords of Norway, the heavy water, which was the A bomb, England would have to surround.

But luckily, they made a preemptive strike and they destroyed all that thing, as you might know what happened. This happened in '42. And then after that, there were already the Germans among themselves were talking about if this is-- because he always said we have to wait. We have to wait because something is coming up. After they knew that this was destroyed, they said it's the end of the war. That we knew that also. This was already in '43.

Now we were-- the Russians came to Krakow.

Don't far it, I want to say something.

January the 13th of 1945. It was quite--

I want to say something before.

And this was the end for us as far as I was concerned.

I have here it says Police Ausweis. From 29 of November, 1940. Many of my relatives moved to Warsaw. And I would like to see them and talk to them, and maybe help them some way. And I had an idea. My father had some notes, people owed him some money. And a few of them were from Warsaw.

So I said to my brother-in-law, write me a note that I'm your secretary and you're sending me to Warsaw to collect the money. I took this with me. And I went to the police to get a permit to go to ghetto, because the ghetto was closed. They had five gates. But without Ausweis, without a permission, you can't get in.

So I went. I was staying with my Greek girlfriends in Warsaw who married a Polack. And we went together. And they give me. Here it is. Permit to go to Warsaw ghetto. And what I did, I had a big bag. In the bottom of the bag, I put a loaf of bread, butter, sausages, and whatever. On the top, a Bible, and a very long nightgown.

And when I go, even we have Ausweis, they have to see what you have in a bag. And they start pulling up the nightgown, he says, OK, go. Every gate was the same story. I was there one week. They were giving me orders. They want some shoes. Well, things I had to buy outside of the ghetto. And each time I was trying to get through a different gate.

And I just did it because I knew they are my relatives. They can tell me something. At that time, my parents were still alive. And also while we were living in Bochnia, I got once a letter from my sister from Lodz ghetto. That outside of Bochnia lives a woman with the child. And whatever I will give her, her husband working in Lodz ghetto will deliver to my parents.

So every other day I went there on a bicycle to deliver, and she had to send the note to her husband to Lodz. And my mother was receiving that. But it worked fine until the last time I went and just before my eyes was walking a man in a long clothes, a Jew. They didn't have a ghetto at that time yet. And the policeman just called him. He looked around. He shot him right on that spot. So I went home. They never saw me again there.

So there are some little incidents you just won't forget.

When was the last time you were in Warsaw ghetto?

That was the time in 1940. But I went to Lodz also at that time. You couldn't get any longer. I went a few times from Warsaw to Lodz. But that was the last time when I could get there.

So then since 1940?

In November, in November 1940.

And after that, the communication that you had was only.

Yeah, it's all stopped. Yes. Only somehow I got a card from my sister from Lodz long time after that both parents are deceased in April 2, 1942.

And you know that they are buried?

Yes. After the war we found their grave and we put a monument. And now every few years, someone goes there and does renew it.

Then you say that the Russians came in, in January of '45.

Yeah.

So then this having to be something else stops. But before we move into that, having to be something else, you say that you had to believe that. And you felt also that you had to believe that, that's what you are and. You acted fairly convincingly.

Well, I had a very bad experience. The war end. My husband, a few colleagues from post office give him the key to watch, look up after their apartment. Because they believe they might be back. And of course, there was apartment, and we were living only in one room. So it's a good opportunity to move there.

But right after the war, all the street cars were stopped. There was no communication. So I was moving on a bicycle wherever I could, and he had to go to work because I quit working at that time already. And why I am going back home, three men stopped me. I recognize our custodian and two men. They were dressed just wearing suits.

Well, we had notes it said you are stealing from Jews, and you are Ukraine. And why you didn't leave town. I said because I am Jewish. I said, well they wouldn't believe it. They took me back to our apartment. And he says, well, can you prove it? I says, how can I prove it? Because your husband is working, the way he was working before. I says, yes. That's true. But now we can tell that we are Jewish.

Well of course, he didn't tell this at the post office. Then lucky me, on the third floor moved a Jewish woman. She used to live there before the war. They called her down. Well, I never learned how to speak Jewish. And my Polish accent was good, as any Polack.

But when the woman came, all of a sudden, just like if my father would be in the back of me. I remember Brucho. I start speaking in Hebrew.



Every year before Passover we were getting a teacher, because I was the youngest. I have to ask the kosher. And I knew it.

And then I was telling her my mother always light the candles on Friday night. And after my parents passed away, my husband was saying Kaddish. And then the woman says, yes, she is Jewish.

Well. They helped themselves to all our belongings, which they said we stole from Jews. But that's my experience being arrested and as non-Jew.

You asked before whether I remembered anything from the war. As far as knowing that there was a war on, all I remembered were the air raid sirens. So that was going on towards the end.

And at one point when we lived in an apartment and the sirens came, we all had to move down into the basement. We took our mattresses and to the kids, we were what? Five years old or six years old. It was like having a big pajama party where everybody ran around. It was a very serious thing for the adults. But the children were running around and having a wonderful time.

And the next day I do recall we went outside to play because it was all clear. And there was one huge crater in the backyard. The yards were, of course, cement. It was not a grassy lawn. And there was a bomb that had not exploded that was dead. But we played around it. And we thought it was a lot of fun.

OK.

So the war was over and now you are liberated. And you had this incident. What were some of the first things that you did when the war was over?

Now, I did not go back to the post office. And I didn't know. This was just like a few days. And walking the streets, two colleagues of mine approached me. He said, Henry. Why aren't you coming back to work? I said, well you know I'm a Ukrainian, and now it's Poland.

No. We are considering you Poland, because we knew from the experience you cooperate with everything, you never-- so I said, well, it's a good idea. I went back to work. And Sophie mentioned it before. The Germans left the 11th of January.

And before they left that evening, there came to me two guys. And they gave me keys from their apartment. They said Henry, we are leaving tonight. And here are the keys from our apartments. We will be back. But we have over there food in our refrigerators. You can use it. Use it all. They never came back, of course.

So we moved right away to-- Sophie started to tell you about the apartment. When she was moving stuff from that one room to the apartment, she was approached by some people.

You told them.

Yeah.

When they came to verify, she told me that my husband works at the post office. He works for the post office? Yes and the telephone company. They came to verify. So they came over there to the gate and I met them because it was under control. They called me down. They said, are you Henry? Yes.

Are you Ukrainian?

I said, yes.

Are you Jewish?

I said, yes. OK. So they let it go everything. They gave her back the bicycle and everything was all right. They wouldn't believe. Then I worked. And as you know, a part of Germany, the Southeast part of Germany, a part-- Wroclaw, which was Breslau, and Niederschlesien. It's the lower Silesia was given to Poland.

And one day, the head of the department came to me and said, Henry, we would like you to take monitors and technicians, and we will give you a bus. And go. We assign you to the new territories. And you will take over the telephone and telegraph.

And I said, OK. And I did. And I came to Breslau. They sent me to Jelenia Gora, which is-- Jelenia Gora, it was Hirschberg.

Hirschberg.

Sophie, don't-- and you go to Hirschberg, and you take over the telephone company. I came to Hirschberg, and there was no Polish administration, no nothing, no Polish men yet. In the windows they were hanging white blankets. They surrounded.

I came to the post office over there, and there was an engineer. Thomas was his name. And I introduced myself, and I showed my credentials. And they take, oh, sure, sure, sure. And he took me right away to all the things. And I said here I have my men. And I have to have lodging for them.

He went to the police over there. It was still the German police, and took keys and gave me an apartment, a beautiful apartment, a Nazi who left and they left everything. We moved to that apartment, a beautiful apartment, furnished with the pictures with everything, and the other people also everybody got some kind of a lodging. And I took over the telephone company.

And it started to normalize. After several months, this was probably September '45, there comes to me a Lieutenant, a Polish Lieutenant. He introduced himself. He said, you are in charge of here? Yes. This is a very important communication, a very important. I said, I realize that. You are responsible for sabotage. I said, I know that. It's true. And OK, do you belong to the party?

No, I don't belong to the party. Oh, you should. I said, no. I never belong to a party. I'm not a political man. And he left. A few weeks later, he came again with somebody else yet. And again, the same stories more or less, and this and that. Being in that position what you are you, you should and actually you have to belong to the party.

At that time, I decided to leave. Because I've seen what is coming. I will be controlled by the parties over there. And we talked it over and I decided to leave, first by myself. And in 1946, I left for Germany.

His brother.

And I lived in Stuttgart several months and start inquiring and see what the stories, how immigration comes about. And I had an apartment, well actually a room in a house. And I said to the people, I'm going back to Poland to fetch my family, which is my wife and a daughter which eight years old. And we will come back here. And I'll try to get a couple of rooms but in the meantime, I'll bring here. And the German woman, she agreed about that.

And I went back to Poland and, again this was an act of desperation. Because they could arrest me. I left-- I left without any notice. I left a high position just like this. But again, I went back. And nothing happened to me.

As a matter of fact, I went to the post office to see my friends. And at that time they asked me, Henry why did you come back? I said, I came back to pick up Millie and Sophie, Sophie and Millie.

Tell me, Henry. We wonder when you left, are you Jewish? I said, I never answered the question. I said, well, what's the difference? If I am, is it any better or worse? No. We just want to know. I never gave them the straight answer.

What I want to bring out about that if they knew that I was Jewish, it was no good anymore. But not knowing, I was good. I was a good friend of theirs. I was accepted.

Yes.

And we packed up our belongings. Let me finish.

OK.

You haven't told us yes.

No I want to say something about that time when you were away.

What happened to you?

We'll get back to that. So you packed up.

I packed, well, whatever it is. And at that time, the borders were still liquid. And the border of Poland and Czechoslovakia which was very close from the place where we lived, when you came over there, was Bricha was acting over there.

They took your things. And they took you on the other side. And you went to Slovakia. And from there, they transferred you right away to Vienna. In Vienna, you stayed over there in a transit camp until they assigned you to a different part of West Germany.

So this is what it was. As a matter of fact, you know who took me over there to that border? One of the post office men in a car took me over there and said goodbye, and went back, and we went to the other side.

Now, we'll get to your side.

Yeah, what I was going to tell you, because Henry left in '46, and about eight months later, he came to get us. In the meantime, what happened in Poland, they had election. And when I was alone without him, one night three men came. And he asked me for whom I'm going to vote. I says, that's not your business. I vote what I vote.

It happens that Henry had a cousin who did belong to a party. And he called me. And he says, well somebody mentioned that the way you answer is not the right way to do it. You just have to go voting. Now since you can't vote alone, you have to go someplace. I have to put you someplace to work so that you can go with the company to vote. So I says, OK, I can work.

So he put me someplace to work in the office. And I place Millie in a big home, it was like a school.

Kindergarten.

Kindergarten.

Yeah. And then the whole group went to vote. There were about 20 of us. And what they did they give us a piece of paper, they give us envelope to put it in, and place it. One woman took out a different card from her pocket. Nobody saw her anymore.

But I did the way they told me, and I was working. And in the evenings I was approached by somebody. They knew I knew how to type. And I start working for the Bricha, for the Jewish organization.

I was working there every evening until Henry came. And then they help us to leave the country.

Did you try to get in touch and find out who of your family survived?

Oh, sure. My sister came back from Auschwitz. And she picked up her daughter. And she says, she doesn't want to stay any longer. And she was telling us how slowly one by one from the family was taken away. Only a few people who live outside of country survived.

That's where I found out about my parents, about my sister from her sister.

After my sister came home.

And she came to pick up her daughter, and went right back to where she was in West Germany where she was liberated. And she came. It was late. It was already September or October.

At the end of-- '45.

1945. Yes.

And she's in America. Now she lived in Cleveland, and she moved last year.

To Florida.

She's widowed. So she is now living permanently in Florida. But she's coming to visit us.

So you didn't feel like you want to settle in Poland. Why do you think you didn't?

Well, we didn't feel like-- we never said that we are Jewish because I don't know what kind of life will be there. And we were thinking even to go someplace that nobody knows who we are, maybe live not as a Jew. But then we decide that I had enough of that living like a puppet. And let's go and live a normal life.

And what prompted me is that the inquiry by those people. These were like the KGB.

The fear of communist system.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

NKVD was converted to KGB. But this is what it was, the Communist Party. And I did not want any of that. And that's what it was. But looking back to those days, when we were liberated at that time before, I didn't even know who I am anymore. I was not confused exactly, I got so used to the way of life I ran with those four years that I thought that this is a normal thing.

You were what you had to be.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Millie, what do you remember of this time after the war is over and until you get to Germany?

Well, after the war was over I remember a few things. But you asked at first when the Russians came in. And that I remember very vividly because some of the Russian soldiers stayed at our house.

They get to stay, yeah.

And they were young men who were so much fun and so friendly, I sat on one of their laps and we sang songs all evening.

Yeah. Those songs, those Russian songs are very pretty. And we used to sing them. Yeah.

That I remember very vividly.

They brought potatoes, and they peeled, and they cooked them. What do you remember about moving from place to place, from Krakow to--

To remember moving. I remember being in a covered truck, like with a tarpaulin in the back. I don't remember traveling in it. But I remember being in it when it was stopped. And voices outside. And then when we had taken a stop. And I asked my father. Did we travel in the winter? Because I remember you took me on a sled.

Yeah, in February.

So. And he said it was one of our rest stops. I was sledding. He took me on a little sled with it. And I do remember another time we must have taken a train--

Oh, sure we did.

--for part of the time. Because I remember throwing things onto the top and climbing on. I don't know where it was or what. But I do remember.

Well, that wagon, what she remembers, we were being helped by Jewish organization only to go to Israel, to Palestine at that time. And about 20 of us, we didn't want to. We wanted to go to Germany. And somebody had somebody someplace.

So we took-- I had a little diamond ring, somebody give something else, and we hired that big truck covered with canvas. And during the night, Millie and another child was there, another boy. They put them under the bench and be quiet, until we went through the border. That's what she remembers.

And we went as far as Berchtesgaden. And Henry knows perfect German. He just went, bought the tickets. And we went to my sister who was at that time in FÃ¼rth, near Nuremberg.

And so that's how you get to--

And that's--

Near Nuremberg, Germany.

--how Millie find out that she is Jewish.

And we stayed in Stuttgart. Because when I was the first time, I was in Stuttgart.

OK. I think that we are done with the--

Because it's over. When he puts that down, you only have five minutes.

Done?

Oh, I didn't see. Yeah.

OK, we'll take another break. And then we'll start up how you got here.

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