

I'm Sara Weinberger. And today we are interviewing Mrs. Esther Friedman, a Holocaust survivor. The project is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland section. Thank you for coming today, Mrs. Friedman. We're going to start off by asking you a little bit about your life right now in Cleveland.

And could you tell me a little bit about, first of all, how old are you?

I am 62.

62. And are you married?

Yes, for 39 years.

Oh boy, 39 years. That's a long time. Can you tell me a little bit about children that you have, and any grandchildren.

Yeah, I have three grown kids, two sons and a daughter, and six grandchildren, all married and happy. My oldest granddaughter is 10. And my youngest is going to be 2 in April.

What do your children do?

Well, my oldest son is a manager in an office from the Internal Revenue. My other son is a lawyer, and he works in the Ohio State House for Senator Schwarzwald. And he is on the Judicial Committee. Judiciary.

My daughter is a housewife now. She finished college. She got married. And she is happy being a housewife.

And is your husband working?

Yeah, he's still working another couple of months.

Are you looking forward to retirement?

I don't know. But we'll make the best of it.

And are you working?

No, I never worked. A little.

I know you said though on our way here that you're doing--

Yeah, I do. I don't consider it work. It's more like pleasure.

Could you tell us what that is?

What? I do babysitting for little kids of all ages, till five, six years old.

Very nice.

OK, we're going to jump way back in time right now to the years before the war. And why don't we start off? Let's go back to about 1939.

Yeah, that was--

How old were you at that time?

I was 16.

Could you tell us where you were living?

Yeah, I lived in Łódź, Poland. And I had a father and mother, four brothers, and one sister.

Were they older or younger?

No, I was the oldest.

And what is your parents do?

My father was a tailor. And my mother was a housewife. Mostly in Europe, the wife didn't work.

Could you tell us a little bit about life in your family and life in Łódź?

Yeah. Well we were, like I said six kids. My father was a tailor. Well, in the beginning when we were small, it was very hard. They weren't poor. If you need a pair of shoes, like when I was 14 years old, and I wanted to go somewhere and I needed shoes. My father didn't have money. He said, you have to wait till payday. It was not easy.

But we were happy. We were a very close family. And I had a very good childhood, and nice brothers, and we were always together.

In the town of Łódź, were you living near non-Jews?

No, well, yeah. When we were small, till I was 14, I always lived in a Jewish neighborhood. Then we moved in a very beautiful neighborhood. But in this area, we didn't know too much of the neighbors. It was a very, very-- it was six or seven buildings around like a courthouse, a big-- and you know only a couple of your neighbors.

Mostly, and even this place were Jewish people. It was a big, big house, not a house. You know, apartments. Big apartments. And there live a lot of people in there. And mostly I knew only my neighbors downstairs and neighbors next door. And they all were Jewish. I didn't know non-Jewish people, never, only that little girl what was the janitor's daughter. She was a little friend of mine. No other. I never know other people, only Jewish people.

Went to school with all Jewish kids and had all Jewish friends, never know other people.

How important was religion in your family?

Religion was not important. We know we're Jewish. My father and mother were not strictly Jewish, I mean religious people. They went to synagogue for Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur. My father didn't go Shabbos. We weren't religious. But we know we're Jewish.

I had a Jewish education. I knew how to read Yiddish when I was seven years old. I always had rabbis coming to the house. As a matter of fact, I knew how to speak even Hebrew a little bit, because when I think 12 I joined the Jewish organization, Betar. And over there, I started to learn Hebrew, learn about Palestine and were very active till I was 16, till the war, you know, with Jabotinsky, the organization. And--

This was a Zionist organization? This was a-- yeah, Betar. Like I knew Begin when he was, once we had that was like-- you had a graduation. We graduated from this. And we made a big banquet. And I was 15. And Begin came to a party.

Menachem Begin.

Menachem Begin, shook our hands and gave us diplomas. I was figuring whenever I go to Israel, I have to see him. But you know, it's hard to get to him. Yes, I belonged and I was active. And it did educate me a lot. I learned about the

world. I learned about Israel. I learned a lot of things in this organization. So I really enjoyed it. So this was before the war.

Had you planned to eventually go to Israel?

No. Actually, I did not. Because you see, whenever I think of leaving the house, I always I said I couldn't leave my parents. I could not go. We were so close. Just thinking about it, I used to cry. Because when the war came, a lot of people run away to Russia, in the beginning, before they closed the borders.

And my mother used to say, no, you want to go to Russia? You have to get married first. Girls don't go nowhere by themselves. So they brought me some kind of big boy. I look at him and I say, no. And I decided not to run. I stayed with my family.

What was the main language that your family spoke?

I spoke Yiddish all the time. We spoke Yiddish. But in the school, we learned Polish. So I learned Polish in school, and I learned a little Hebrew in the organization, and always had the rabbis teaching me Yiddish. I still write good Yiddish. And I still read Yiddish.

I used to tell stories for all my friends. The kids, we used to sit down in the courtyard, and on a stoop. And I told them what I read in the papers. And they used to call me. Look, at the [NON-ENGLISH], you know everything. I was only seven. Maybe I didn't understand some of the things. But I told them stories because we have a few kids learned Yiddish to read. But my parents always want us to be educated.

As a matter of fact, I had once a teacher and she teach me German. But as soon we start what's going on-- we found out what is coming in Germany, because in 1938 people were talking. So we stopped, even the school, they teach us German. But they stopped teaching German.

Because actually, Poland was against the Nazis too, but in a different way. So they took it out of schools. But I learned private. I had a private teacher. No matter how poor they were, my father always kept teachers for the boys.

Education was very important.

For to know how to daven, and to know. But actually you didn't learn religion in your private home. You just learned how to daven in Hebrew. You really didn't even understand what you're saying. But in the schools, they used to have a [NON-ENGLISH]. And there was a religious teacher. And she used to come and she teach you about the Jewish religion in the schools, in the public schools.

But if you learn private like in a cheder, they used to go the boys, they only teach you Hebrew, like in the thing. But we really we didn't what he's saying because we didn't understand Hebrew. You just learn how to daven. That's all. But Yiddish, if I read, I know what I do. When I read the paper, I know what I'm reading. I never read a Polish paper, only a Yiddish paper. My father used to have a Yiddish paper.

What kinds of things did your family do for fun? We didn't do nothing for fun. They had fun with the kids playing in the house. The little kids were always entertaining. And when I was bigger, we used to go to a picture show. And I used to belong to that organization. And we really enjoyed ourselves. We used to go there, and dance horas. And we learned a lot there.

That's what-- my sister she joined too. Because they were going after me, and I was the oldest. And my father and mother got interested in the organization because of us. They came down. They wanted to see who is there, what kind of boys and girls. And they really were very interested in our lives. They wanted always to know people, what we're going. I had a lot of friends. And they always encouraged me to bring them home.

And even when the war was already, and a German, he was a high official. They took up one of the apartments from

somebody who ran away. And my friends used to come up still. And we used to play and they used to play guitar. And we used to dance a little bit. And my father already started to worry. He said, we'll have to cut this out because this German down there, he might not like it. This was before we went into the ghetto. But I always had lots of friends.

What did you look like?

I was a little girl, very tiny, always the smallest in the class. And all the girls used to pick me up and play with me. In the school I was always known, because I was the smallest one, very tiny girl. . I'm still tiny.

What kinds of plans did you have for your future when you were 16?

Well, I tell you the truth. I always said I'm not going to get married young. Because after you married right away, you had a full house of kids. Because that was the tradition, every year to have a child. I grew up with five little kids in the house. And it was a lot of time was not enough food, when my father used to be on a strike, and my mother used to go to this brother to borrow something. And I used to say to myself, if I don't have money to get my kids whatever they need, I'm not going to have any children until I be able.

We already, this far away times, we were thinking about better lives than our parents had. So I always said, I'm not going to get married till I be ready and be able to give the kids what they need. Because as you go, and you are 15 or 16, you want things. And if your parents, they can't give it to you, you are really upset. And you cry a lot. But it worked out. We didn't need as much as our kids need here.

If we had one dress for the Saturday, and a dress to go to school, and a pair of shoes, that's what you need.

During that time were you aware of any antisemitism?

Me personally? I did not know. We heard in the papers. We went to, and there were those who in 1938, 1937, had signs. No dogs and Jews permitted. That was in Poland, in our city. There were stories in neighborhoods where non-Jews were, few Jewish were living that they were stabbed and they were hit. But where I lived, I didn't experience because like I said, I didn't associate with non-Jews.

But my uncle, one of my uncles, he had an apartment in a big business together with a non-Jew. And this was in 1935. And he always used to complain that this man is such a anti-Semite. And he's going to sell the business. And he went to Israel for a year. And he bought over there a business. And he moved. He said, he doesn't like the way Poles goes. That there's a big antisemitism. I did not know personally. Because I didn't experience that.

But there were a lot. If you really would associate or you worked with non-Jewish people, you could see it. But I never worked. I was only 16 when the war broke out.

Were you aware of any groups that existed to fight antisemitism?

No. I did not know, not too many. They did not. I was not involved. So I really didn't know.

You said that your uncle that moved to Israel, he seemed to be aware that something was going.

Yes, because he had business with a non-Jewish man.

In 1937, 1938, and maybe the beginnings of 1939, did people have a sense that something was going to happen?

Yes, there were. There were a lot talk about that increased antisemitism. And what the Poles, actually in 1939 before the war, they had big get-togethers in the street. But they were against Germany. When Germany invaded Czechoslovakia, then Poles said they're going to fight the Germans. And they had big groups together and talked about. And I went to one of the rallies there was.

And we decided that this was already very short before the war that it's going to be a war. There was talk about it. My father at that time did a little bit already, and my two brothers start helping, work with him. And my father worked with them. He got a little better. And he had a little more money. And most of the time you had like weksel, they call it. It was like here a check, checks.

And if you cashed a check for somebody, so you get a little interest on it. So he cashed some checks. And my brothers used to tell him, daddy, don't do that. Because the war is there. And everybody was excited talking about the war. But my mother was crying. She said, little kids, you don't know what you're excited about. A war is terrible. Because she lived through the second war too. And she said, oh, don't talk about the war.

But we were talking. We were excited. We were young. And we didn't really know what the war is. And we went one day I remember I went to help they made those to hide, when a bomb falls, the--

Shelters.

Shelters. And I worked all day digging. And then the next few days I was sick. I wasn't used to physical work. And there was a lot of talk about the war coming.

But I didn't know. I didn't know Poles. I didn't know. But I knew people who came from Germany. And they were very bitter. They were talking always about Hitler. And at that time, I didn't know what Hitler is. When you are 14 or 15, you don't really care what's going on in somebody else's land.

But when we were coming home, a girl had to be home when you were 16, before they close the doors. You live in a big apartment, before 11:00, you have to be home. Otherwise, you have to ring the bell to let you in. And that was not a nice girl if you come after 11:00. So my mother always used to say, you come home early. I don't know what's going on. There's a lot of stabbings. And they helped a lot of Jewish people.

But when you're young, you don't think about it. You really don't. I never thought about it.

When were you first aware that the war had broken out?

Well, I was aware of this. I was home. It was the 1st of September. And I think it was a Friday. I don't remember. I was helping my mother clean the house. This I never will forget. And all of a sudden, we heard like loud noises like a bomb. And our neighbors, everybody came out. And they had the verandas. And they started talking. Oh, the war broke out. The war, Germany is coming.

And we went down in the basement. We had basements. And we stayed there for three days. They were bombing. But they said that the Germans born in Poland, they were from German ancestry, like the fathers were German. All of a sudden, you never knew about them. They came out of the corners, and they told the Germans where not to bomb. Because our city was a big factories, a lot of factories. Manufacturers, they're making materials. And they didn't bomb one of those for three days.

And then they came in. They invaded our city. Our city was the first one to be invaded in Poland. So when the war broke out, I was 16. We stayed three days in that basement. The bombing stopped, and we went out. And on the streets were people-- farmers with cows. Everybody was walking. They were running away. And they said that men should run away. That if Hitler comes in, they first will kill the boys and the men.

So all the men start running from our city. They were running to Warsaw. My father and my two brothers went away that day. And they were walking. The same thing with the other people. But my father, he said wherever they walk the bomb was, the planes were over them. And he said, where do we going? And we're going into the Warsaw area, then we are.

So he stopped somewhere. And a farmer took him in, him and my brothers. And he said, look, don't run. They're running to Warsaw. That will be even worse than in your city. I mean they are in already. And he kept them all day. At

night, my father came home with my brothers. And my mother was so happy. And we all were happy that they came back.

And they really were smart, because all the people who were running, they were bombed on the way. And those who were captured were tortured. When they come back, they said horrible things happened to them. They made them lay on glass. They made them walk on glass. And they went to Warsaw. And Warsaw was so terrible. They had no water, because after they were invaded L³dz, they went to Warsaw.

And the neighbors of our son, he was in Warsaw. And he come back after four weeks. He said it was so terrible, they had no water. They had no food because the bombing was going on there much longer than in our city. Our city, they didn't hit nothing, only they scared. Because all the factories were not touched. In our city were big factories. Nothing was touched, and they took everything over.

My father came home. There was no work. Who needed clothes? And we stayed. OK, my sister used to go to-- there was no food, a shortage. My sister, she used to be the shopper. She used to dress up and go out to the stores wherever a store was, and bought whatever she could. There was some kind of kasha, we never ate it before the war, yellow kasha. And my mother used to cook that. And bread was so hard to get. We had to stay in lines.

So once my brother, he stood a couple hours in that line. And they took him out and they say, you are Jew. And they beat him up. And he came home without the bread. This was right after the Germans came in. The educated people, they were professors, they run away, and teachers. Because the Germans wanted those people first.

So we had a very rich neighbor. They both were professors in a college. And they had a beautiful apartment. And they had bought coals for the winter and potatoes. And they had a maid. They lived on the third floor. We lived on the fourth floor. They knew our family, just from seeing us walking up and down the steps. And the lady before she ran away, she told the maid to give some coal for us and some potatoes.

But the maid wanted to hide everything for herself. But she gave us a little potatoes and a little coal. That people left a beautiful apartment, a big apartment, beautiful furs, and everything they left with that maid. And this apartment, a German took over. He moved in the first. He was a general or whatever. And we stayed.

Every day, we had other rules, other announcements. They were on the street. It came Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. They wanted the Jews to have open the stores. Well, we didn't have the store, and we weren't worried about it, you know? But it was really the life got real bad. I still didn't felt it, still was a little food on the table.

We were mostly staying home at night because you were afraid to go out. And then every time came different news, what the Germans are doing, and the horrible news that they invaded. Finally, they took over Warsaw. And they're going to make a ghetto. And we all have to move to the ghetto.

January of 1940, I had an aunt living in the city, where the ghetto was supposed to be formed. So we had to--

This was in L³dz still?

Yeah. I didn't go for four years now. Well, anyway my aunt, the non-Jewish people were moving out from these places. And they start to organize the ghetto. And we start moving our belongings. My aunt, she lived in that house. And there were not houses like here. We have a single home. There in one apartment, it was like a building, lots and lots of families. Because they had one room. You know?

So in one corridor, there lived about 10 families on one floor. So as soon the non-Jews moved out, because they made them move out, and the Jews started moving in. So my aunt used to live there. She secured a place for us. So we had two and a kitchen before we lived in the city before we went to the ghetto. And here we had to move in one room.

Your whole family lived in one room.

In one room. We could move our furniture only with a sled, because it was start winter. And so little by little, we moved over whatever we could to fit in one room. So we had two beds and me and my sister slept on the floor in one corner. And the other corner my two brothers slept, and the two little brothers with their parents, they in the beds.

And we had no-- that was 1940 when we moved in there. So when it started to get bad, my father had no work. I did work a little. I used to crochet hats for the people who were running to Russia. I had a lot of friends. And I used to open old sweaters, and make new sweaters from little pieces. I used to sit and crochet, me and my sister were crocheting. And we made a little money.

So you stopped going to school then?

Yeah, no school. No school. And we worked, me and my sister. And whoever needed a sweater, I had a little money. And then this stopped. So my mother and my father had no work. At that time was no that was not organized yet, the ghetto. We just moved there.

So my mother, she said, I'm not going to let my kids starve. I'm going to do my best. So she went out early in the morning to bakeries, and bought biscuits. And then she went from one in our apartment to the other on the whole street, and was selling biscuits. So she made a little money.

And then when it got a little warmer, my father and mother was going out to the farms and bought vegetables. And my sister and my mother was selling it in the front of our house. And I used to do the housekeeping. I used to cook, because I was not a good salesperson. I was more domestic. So I did the inside.

One of my brothers used to buy candy and sell it on the street or saccharin. Saccharin was forbidden. And if they catch you, you were sent to jail. Finally, this settled. I mean, the ghetto start to organize. They closed the ghetto in 1940.

We were ate. I had another neighbor from ate, and a family. Their family didn't know nothing. They were starving. Only the rations, what the Germans give them. And everybody said, boy, what a beautiful family you are. Everybody of you work. And you try to make the best of it. There really weren't-- some people said to my father, your daughter have golden hands. Look what kind of sweater she makes from little nothing.

And we really did pretty good, as long we were not starving. But then one day, they came and they said that all men who wants to go to work to another camp, shall go and register. So my brother went and registered. And he went into that place where they get together.

How old was he at this time?

He was one year younger than I. This was 1940, and I was 17. He was 16. And he volunteered to go to work in a camp. We didn't know what. So he registered, and he went there. And it was the 1st of May. I never forget that. And it was snowing. This was 1941. And it did snow, and I went to see him there. And then they get an examination. And they send him home. They said he is not-- he is sick, that he cannot be sent to work.

We didn't know he is sick. My mother used to say, look at that. He got such a thin neck. And he got so thin. But we didn't have no doctors. Finally, he really got sick. When he came home from that place he was very sick. And then my mother called a doctor. And there was nothing they could do. He had tuberculosis, already advanced, and he died. This was our first loss in our family. I never forget it.

My mother, she sat all night and cried. And so I told to myself, I'm never going to have children. Well, this was our first experience with death. So well, we couldn't-- they liquidated all those things, like going out. They made a ghetto, the ghetto closed.

So you couldn't go out anymore out of the city, like my mother used to go to buy vegetables. And nothing, you couldn't go nowhere. Just stay in the ghetto. So they started organizing kitchens. You get every day a dish. You got rations. You get the bread for a family. Each child gets a bread for a week.

So my mother used to cut that bread and divide it for each child to save it for the whole week. So we did save it. But bread dries out. So every day we went to take a piece of our bread. And we said, somebody ate my bread. Somebody touched my bread. Everybody had his own piece of bread.

Some people got the bread. They ate it up right away. But we saved it for the eight days. Then she goes out and she meets a man who was our neighbor. And he became one of the organizers of the kitchens. And she tells him that she would like one of our kids to go work for him. She said, take at least one of my children to your kitchen, not to eat. He could send you to each kitchen there are a lot of kitchens.

And he said, you know how? How about each kitchen sends him some soup to eat for his family. And there were only three people. Each kitchen wanted to show. How about you bring me a bread, and I'll give you a pot of soup? Because for soup for us, for our family, was much better than a bread.

So for these few, for a while, we were exchanging our bread with this man for this soup. And he took me into a kitchen. So I was the one who started working in the kitchen. So I had food in the kitchen, there was always soup three times a day. So I didn't eat my bread. So my family could have an extra piece of bread.

I worked in the kitchen for two years. And meanwhile, every day, every few weeks they were taking out people from the ghetto, sending them out. We didn't know. One of my aunts, one day came and she said they have to leave tomorrow. So my brother, my middle brother, he did make a big-- he was a tailor. He sewed for her a big sack so she could pack some of her belongings. And we didn't know where they were taking those people.

Maybe there were people who knew. But I was too young, and I didn't know what was going on. So I worked two years in that kitchen. One day, my father comes home and he said that was Passover, that we have to go. They're going to send us out. So we had packed all whatever we could, and we all went on Czarnecki that was. And I worked in that kitchen over there, where they took all the people. And we stayed there all night. Finally, somebody came and said that whoever is a tailor shall go back home. So we went back home.

What year was this?

This was in 1941.

Yeah 1941, because my older brother was not alive anymore. He died in 1941 in May. No, this was 1942. Because it was Passover 1942. And we went back home. And I go to that man to give me back a job in the kitchen. When I walked in he said, what are you doing here? You come back from the other war. See? They must have know something is going on. I said, well, my father is a tailor, and they send us back.

So what he said, there won't be no more work in the kitchen, because they're closing all the kitchens. Just the only kitchen will be there on Czarnecki, where they take all the people. And from there, they send them with wagons. And they give you a good soup. And really, I worked there, and they had very good soups there with a lot of meat in, and this was a goodbye for the people who left. So I worked there for a while till they closed that too.

So then I had to go work in a straw resort. We were making the straw boots for the Germans, whoever went to Moscow. That was very cold in Russia. So they were wearing over their shoes, that straw boots. So we did have to learn how do it. They had instructors. And they taught how to do that. As a matter of fact, there is one man here, Levine, he was our boss. He was the whole-- he was the boss of that factory.

Well anyway, this is already later.

What was the rest of your family doing during this time?

Nobody. My father was working. See, they organized-- they worked for-- I don't know. They made clothes for the Germans or whatever. Nobody else worked. In 1942, yeah, my brother worked outside, my second brother. They took

him out of the city. They worked on some kind of demolition buildings. One day, he came home. This was in January.

And he says that some kind of typhus broke out. This is the spot fever they call it, mountain spot. And he, middle of the night, he got very sick. He had a high fever. He was delirious. He was talking, and we didn't know what happened. And the boy got so sick. Next day, we called a doctor. He didn't know nothing about him. They took him to the hospital.

And they put us in a quarantine in our own house, because this was very-- it was how do you call it?

Contagious.

Contagious.

They took us all to a barn. They disinfect all our clothes. And in one room, and I was taking care on that sick boy for two days, nobody got sick. Here if somebody sneezes, you're afraid to go touch this person. I was washing him, and I was feeding him. He was unconscious. He didn't know nothing. And nobody got sick. Nobody got that disease. And we were three weeks. Somebody was outside the door. Nobody could go in. Just a nurse came and brought some food. We gave her money. She bought for us whatever. There was rations, you had cards.

And one of my friends lived very close to that hospital where my brother was taken. So she went over there to see him. You couldn't go in, just to the window. And then one day, a man came and said he died. They took him out of our house. We never saw him. This was my second brother. This was in February 1942.

How old was when he died?

He was 15. And he told that girl, you know who talked to my friend, that he is dying the same way his brother died. For three weeks, we were in the house. It was so cold. And the snow was on the walls. We were just with blankets covered, and whatever the girl brought in. There was no wood. My mother started chopping the furniture to cook a little soup. They gave us a little bread. And we just took hot water and a little margarine, and put a few pieces of bread and we sipped it.

So my father got sick. We all got swollen. One day my father, that was in May, it was terrible starvation in the ghetto. There was so little food. The only food what I had was the soup I still was working in the kitchen in 1942. So I didn't need at home. And people were dying.

So I just I have a book from the ghetto. I bought it in Israel 1970. I just looked it over yesterday. I never could make myself look at it. They say how many people died that May 1942. You know that they came with wagons to pick up the dead. So this was the end of May. See, in February, my brother died. At the end of May, my father one day said, I can't go to work today. I am sick. And he went to bed, and I called the doctor. There was Levine's wife, Yokish.

Mr. Levine lives here. She was a doctor here in Cleveland for a while. And she came. And she said that nothing can-- he is dying. In the morning two days later, my mother got up and he was dead. So my father died in May.

Do you know what he died of?

Starvation, just no food, just a little bread and water. No food. The girls brought me some food when we were at the yeshiva, from wherever I worked in the kitchen. They send over some soup for us. That was May. It was cold and hungry. I was terrible hunger. There was dying so many people. They come to pick my father up. They had already 10 people on the wagon.

Did they have a funeral for him?

I don't even remember. I was thinking, yes, before I got ready to-- I still don't remember even if I went to the cemetery. After that, my father died. And I was going on. This was 1942, in May. In September, all of a sudden come out a rumor that everybody will have to give up the babies, the children. They're going to take the children to a better place.

My mother, you know, I really did all the managing in the house. She was not used to cook like that. She used to go shopping, whatever she need, for Saturday. You baked challahs. And you baked cake. And you cook. Here they give her a little bit of that, a little bit of-- she didn't know how to manage. So most of the management I did. I did the cooking. And I was younger and my mind was better, especially after my mother had to go work. She worked at a cemetery.

So once the girls brought her home, because she was all fainted. She was going there at the cemetery. She went to see my brothers always and my father. So she was sick. She got sick too. One day, I got sick. I got a high fever. My mother started crying. Oh, I hope I'm not losing you too. But thanks God, I have a very strong-- my body. But there were big beautiful girls that were dying just they were going out and never came back.

Me, I was so little, maybe I didn't need that much food. When I got hungry, I just was shaking a little bit. But somehow I managed. But other people, as soon as they got the bread, they ate it. And for eight days they had nothing to eat. So they were dying.

And I worked in the kitchen, so it was a little help too. But there came out with that rumors. They're going to take the children. So my mother had a sister right across from the hall. She had three beautiful kids. She dressed them all up, and she send them out.

At that time, the first day, the Jewish police was supposed to take those children from the parents. So one of my neighbors ran away to her mother. We didn't know which area they will come first. She came home crying. They took her baby away. My aunt dressed up her children. They're going to have better there where they're going to take them than in the ghetto. And they took them away.

I hear the neighbors saying, you know I was 18. But my head was working. My mother's not. She said, all right, let's get the kids away. I had the two little brothers. I said, oh no. We're not giving them away. I heard that neighbor say. We lived in a corner house. So we had two entries. So the police came, was supposed to come with one entry. I took my two little brothers and I ran out. I ran after that neighbor. She took her son. And I heard her saying she's going. So I went there. And sure enough, the police came to our house.

And they took all the kids who were there. But I came home and my brothers were safe. That's sperre, they called it. For eight days they were taking. Well, they saw the police, the Jewish police didn't do too well. The Germans were starting coming. Before it start that thing, some potatoes came into the ghetto. And they were supposed to be rationed off to the people. My little brother went for the potatoes. And we had our potatoes.

Other neighbors didn't have time yet to get them. And for eight days, you couldn't go nowhere. Hunger was so-- you know so my mother used to say give everybody who needs potatoes. She was a really good person. And if we live, and if they be here, they give us back the potatoes. For eight days, there was no food. The stores were closed, because they were taking people.

So we had a Jewish policeman living in the same building. So he told us that next day they coming to our house. I got up at 5:00 in the morning, I took my mother. They were taking all the people already, you see, and the children. And I took them to my girlfriend's house. Over there it was already that they already searched over there. They were coming to each house with a gun, and say, all Juden [NON-ENGLISH]. Everybody come down to the courtyard. And then they made a selection.

Whoever they liked, they took, and whoever they were still good to work, they left. So I took away my kids, because they start at 8:00 in the morning. I took my two little brothers and my mother to my friend. Sure enough, they came. I put a little rouge on my face. I put high heels on. My sister did that too. And they left us because we were young.

We were young and we still could be-- for use to work for them. At night, I went. And I took my mother home and my two brothers. I really saved them. This was 1942, September. All the people who lived in our building, they brought us back the potatoes.

But life, so they closed up at that time, they closed up already the kitchens. And I went to work to the that shoe resort, straw resort. In 1943, my mother got sick. She had from the starvation from the hunger, she got tuberculosis. There was no food. She needed some porridge. She needed some. So in the factory, when you worked, you got a soup. So me and my sister, because my two little brothers didn't work yet, they had to stay home because if they see him on the street, they'll catch them. So we used to pick out a few little potatoes and save it for my mother.

We were going on every day to work. And then 1943, my mother got very sick. And she died. She died June 1943. And I lived with my two little brothers and my sister. I had the neighbors who knew us, and they promised my mother they can take care of us.

Why don't we stop now and take a little break? And then we'll continue.