

My name is 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.

We stopped at the point where you said that your mother had died, Mrs. Friedman, and then you were in charge of raising your brothers and sisters.

Well, I forgot to tell you that my father died. He was 49 years old. My mother lived a year longer, because he died in May 1942. My mother died in 1943. The hunger was so bad, the starvation. My sister once went up to the river surrounded with wire. The whole ghetto was surrounded with wire type wires. And there were certain places where people from the city came. And you could buy some butter or something.

So when my mother was sick, my sister once went and she almost was killed because the Germans were surrounding the outside the ghetto. They were watching. But she came back. And she bought some butter. And after my mother died, I lived with the kids. But every day, I went to work and my sister went to work. Every day were different rumors. Every day they said, they're going to send us out again and again. We didn't know nothing what was going on in the world.

We didn't know. We had no radios. We didn't have no papers. We didn't know nothing about the war, about the world. We just lived in our small little world, every day fighting for a little life. We accepted that we had no choice. We were happy we could go to work, because at work, if you came to work, you got a soup every day. And you got once in a week an extra special, a little jelly, or whatever they gave you if you went to work.

So me and my sister were working. My two little brothers stayed home because we didn't want them to be outside the house. They were not supposed to be alive. We saved them. Anyway, one day I found out that they going to again, take away whoever was left. We had a friend who was a very good friend of my parents before the war. And he was a barber. And he worked with the Gestapo. He worked for the Gestapo, for the people there. He was given haircuts. So he had a lot of more food. The Germans gave him all this food.

And I went to his house to make some sweaters for his wife. So one day, I found out that they were going to take away the children. I went to them and I asked them if they could help me hide my brothers. And he said, my dear, if I could hide myself, I am working for the Gestapo. I'm their barber, because you see we are all packed. We don't know what's tomorrow, even me.

So then I went to that Mr. Levine, who is now-- at that time he was a very big official in the ghetto. And it was such a long walk. And it was such a hot day. And I was a very courageous person for my-- and I went to him and I told him. What can I do to hide my little two brothers?

He said, no, we can't do nothing. We are all going to be one day sent out of the ghetto. So we have to take day by day. I did what I could. But one day it got so bad that I said, let's go. We pack everything, and we'll go voluntarily wherever they send us. Because there were rumors that they send us in a better place that we'll have more food there and better living conditions.

I am all packed. My neighbor came in, the policeman's wife. And my aunt come in. And she said, what are you doing, children? I said, well, we decided to leave the ghetto ourselves. Oh no, you're not going nowhere. As long as we are here, we all stay and hide as long as we can. You're not leaving. They didn't let us go.

So every day, every day more and more people. This was in 1943, July and August. There was a little room up to the roof. We went and did hide there during the day. We stayed there all day with all my neighbors, whoever still was in that building. Because they didn't let us leave. But then came news that the Germans going to each house with dogs. And they're sniffing out the people. They're finding where the people hide.

Then we all had to go. This day was the 18th of August. I never forget that day. We all went to that place, you know where they put us onto the wagons.

How old were your brothers at this time?

This, my little brother, I was seven years older than the youngest. And this was 1943. I was 20. And he was 13. No I was 14 when he was born. So I was 20 and he was six. Yeah six, or seven years old. The other was 10. You don't think.

Well, anyway we went to that spot where all the people came. And we stayed there till the wagons arrived. And I fell asleep. I have to tell you something. I am not a religious person. I am not an old-fashioned person. But I never forget that. I dozed off and I fall asleep. And my mother came to me. I dreamed. And she said, I made some pancakes. And she said, oh these pancakes are so sour.

You didn't think about it. Then they came at night. They put us to the wagons. And they gave two breads for us, for me and my children. My two brothers and my sister. And they put us in the wagons. You cannot believe it. So many people in one wagon. Me and my brothers and my sister found a little corner. And those two breads between us. And whatever I had, a few belongings. We used to have the beautiful bedspreads. They were from some velvet. And we had one velvet tablecloth. These were all possessions.

And a few things, personal things we took with the wagons with us. And nobody can even believe what was going on in that. You're all night riding. There is no toilet. People need to go. We are young kids, young girls. You're so ashamed. You need to go there in a pail.

And the screams and the crying, and we couldn't even touch the bread. We said, we'll save it till we'll arrive to the new camp. We're not hungry. You know, I asked my little brothers if they want to eat something. No we'll eat when we arrive. We rode all night and all day I think, till we arrived to Auschwitz. When we arrived and my sister looked out the window. She said, where did they brought us? There is a crazy house here.

We had seen people running around without hair, barefoot and raggedy clothes. This is a camp they brought us here? This is a crazy house. Then they opened the wagons. And there were the men in those blue and gray. They had some kind of clothes. And they say men, separate women, separate kids, boys separate, girls separate. And I'm crying. I say, these are my two little brothers. I cannot give them away. And this man talks to me in Yiddish. He says, you'll see your two little brothers in two weeks. You have to give him up now, because they have to go separate and you're separate.

So my sister remembered. She had a little comb in the wagon. We have to leave everything in the wagon. So she runs back for that little comb. And meanwhile we went. And there is the German, the big guy. And he says you go here. You go here. You go here. You go here.

So I went to this side. We didn't know. After the war, you found out everything. But at that time we didn't know. And I lost my sister till she came back from the wagon. And he let her go on this side where I went. So we went. We came down there. They put us in a big barrack. And it was first they took us in. They shaved us the hair. They took all our hair off. We had to take off all our clothes and go take a bath.

We took a shower. And we all asked for towels. And they left. You don't need no towels. You'll dry out. And then you're so young. And here, there are men walking back and forth. You feel so humiliated. And without hair, they cut off my hair. They cut off my sister. I didn't recognize her. She didn't recognize me. And then you went. And they throw you some rag. Some girls got warm clothes. Some girls got light clothes.

And it was September, yeah August, September. I arrived August. And it was in Auschwitz is in the mountains. During the day, it was nice. And the night was cold. So we had no shoes, no underwear. They cut my hair, and they say you go here. So we went to this side. And they put you in a barrack, 1,000 girls in one barrack. I was crying. I did not-- they gave you some bread. I couldn't eat. I lost my two-- I didn't know I lost them, you know. But they took away my two little brothers.

I couldn't eat for three days. I couldn't sleep. They put you five, five, five, five. 1,000 women, five, five, five. And they gave for each girl for the first girl, they gave a little can of soup like in each she had to pass it on next, from one dish five people. I couldn't eat. I didn't care. Then you have to lay down five people.

I couldn't find a place where to lay down, so I just sit. For three days I didn't eat and I didn't sleep. Finally, when we were in Auschwitz, each day, there is two sides. One side one. In the morning they pass up soup on one side all the barracks. And they then in the evening they pass out the soups on the other side.

The first couple of days we ate the soup, only one soup. Then each night, 2 o'clock at night, they wake you up. And they count. You have to go out and they count you. The first two days I told my sister, we just hugged each other. We were cold. I said, we're not going to be able to survive here more than two days.

People got sick. Girls got diarrhea, and all kinds of things. You are barefoot. You are naked. At night it's so cold. And you have to stay for two hours till they count. Then in the morning again, and then 5 o'clock again. 5 o'clock they give you a piece of bread with some jelly on it or butter. And that only soup in the morning or in the evening, whichever block you are.

So one day, I see that some girls forming, you have to be five, five, five. So they're passing up soup. There so they just join the group. And they got another soup. So I learned that. So in the morning, I had my soup on my side. And in the evening, I went and wherever they passed out soup, we just follow more people.

But one soup they used to give was some kind of kasha. And my sister, if she would have to starve, she couldn't eat it. So I had her soup. Then I once went to help bringing the soups. So you get an extra soup, and you can grab a potato, raw potatoes. If you're lucky, if they don't beat you up for it.

So I was a month in Auschwitz, and learned how to survive. But the one thing was nobody can believe it. You have to go to the bathroom, a thousand girls together. You block is going now to the bathroom. And everything is open. And there is always men around working there. You're so humiliated. Then we used to go one day they came. And we have to go from-- we were like in Birkenau. And you had to go to the other side. We don't know for what.

They take off all-- we had to take off all our clothes. And they looked at you, if you don't have any disease or any rashes. So we went to the other camp. And I saw a girl. She was a neighbor of mine. And she started telling me that she is three years already here. When they first took the people, and she was with her sister, and her sister died. And I say, they took away my two little brothers. She didn't tell me nothing.

She didn't want to tell me. I said, what did they do with those kids? She didn't say nothing. I said, why are those chimneys always smoking. We were so dumb. The girl said, they're baking bread over there. Who could believe that they take and they kill people, or gas them, or whatever. So I see this lady. And I worked with her in the kitchen. And she calls me in, and she asked me if I'm hungry. She's going to give me some soup. Because they worked there. We didn't work. And those people on the other side, they were working, so they got extra soups. She had the kasha soup. So I ate her mine and my sisters.

And my stomach got so big. And here you got to undress. And this German tells asks me if I'm pregnant. And I say, no. I wasn't married. So he sends me in there to a building. I didn't know that it's the crematoria there. Later I found out. And there is a lady. And she was the doctor. And she examined me. She looked at me. She listened to mine. She started laughing. She said, no. You just had a lot of soup. And she sent me out.

Later, I found out that if I would be pregnant, I would never get out of there. So we went back to our camp. Then they made all kinds of experiments. They took some from your rectum, some kind of little pieces of, everyday something else.

When you act funny, you are so humiliated to always be naked before of men. So one day they came and they said they're going to send us out somewhere. And we had to go, and they throw us some clothes, shoes. They gave us shoes at that time. Because before we were all barefoot. For the whole month, I didn't have any shoes. No underwear, only that one dress. I was lucky that I had a warm dress. So at night I wasn't cold.

And they're going to send us out somewhere. So when you go into the wagon, to the train, they give you a piece of bread

with butter on it. The butter melts. And you have to hold your bread in your hand. You have no suitcase. So you didn't have even a little sack. So most of the girls ate it up right away. What are they going to keep a little piece of bread. Me and my sister, we were saving our little bread. We didn't know how long we were going to travel.

She put it in here. In her bosom she puts the bread. And then I had another dream, something bad. And I wake up. My sister is crying. They stole her little bread, whatever she had. We were going I think three days on the trains. Because we couldn't always move. Because the other trains, the military trains were passing. And we arrived to Bergen-Belsen. We arrived in the middle of the night. And there was kettles of soup.

They gave you each here, at least they gave each person a soup, but no spoon. So we ate the soup the way we could. And then they put us in barracks that were only like tents, . no floors. Just how you call it, the air-- no floors, just bare sand over there in the barracks. And the facilities, like water and toilets, everything was outside. So if we had to wash, and it was already November, you had to wash outside. It was so cold.

You still didn't have shoes?

Yeah. We had the shoes what they gave us in Auschwitz. With this actually were those wooden like, they have it in Holland, those wooden shoes. Matter of fact, I saw him in the museum, one girl did from Theresienstadt. And I remind myself, I had those on. We were in Bergen-Belsen. And it started raining season. And it was raining so hard that our tents were all soaked. So they had us to move to a safer place, where it was made big buildings. They were from wood.

And it was so crowded because most of the people, they were starting to liquidate Auschwitz. That was already 1944, August 1944, November. And they were liquidating Auschwitz. They were sending out the people. So Bergen-Belsen was much better for us than Auschwitz.

But still, no spoons. We made some things from wood, where we found to be able to eat with that. They used to give coffee each morning. But I never could drink coffee. I wasn't used to drink coffee. But some people it was OK, it's just a little-- I was a lucky person. I think I survived because I had that extra years what I worked in the kitchen. And I had the ability of sleeping a lot. Because once we were punished, some of the girls took some the tents, they cut it up and they made some clothes for them, some shoes, to cover them.

So they punished the whole group. And we didn't have no food for one day. But I was lucky. I slept a lot. So I didn't felt that much the hunger. I was used to hunger, but not in all, no food at all for two days. And I slept a lot. So one day, a German man came. And he was looking for some people to take Germany to work. Because most of the German boys went to the war. And they were so far, it was 1944 already. They were low. They didn't have no workers. So actually they had a lot of people volunteering.

They got paid from Belgium, and from Russia, and from I met Polish boys. But they got paid for their work in Germany. But we did not. We were slaves. This man came and he picked 298 girls. We didn't know for what he picked them. And he said he needs two people more.

Nobody wants. Nobody is moving. I told my sister, you know, it's so bad here. The Auschwitz girls are coming and it's so crowded and there was one they call him Napoleon, she was such a bad person. She was punishing us for any little thing. Let's go. What we have to lose?

I go over to this man. And I told him too, we want to go, me and my sister. He said, but you're so little. I said, look I have such good hands to work. I'd be a good worker. He took us. We arrived. So again, this was January. It was cold. And we were in the train for three days going to Germany. We arrived in Germany, in Hamburg, city of Hamburg. We came to the station and then they put us five, in five columns. And on each side on soldier, on each side of the five girls, here a soldier, and here a soldier. We couldn't run away.

And we walked. We had to walk to the camp where we were to be settled. We didn't know where they'd taken us. But we walked, we walked, and walked, and walked. And we were scared they were going to shoot us. All the stores we start hearing that they're shooting people. But we volunteered, and we went on our own. We had nobody to blame. And

here people, German people were throwing apples at us. But we couldn't pick it up. Because we had those soldiers watching us.

And finally we arrived to the camp. And then we found out we walked seven miles. So who knows how long? And we arrived to this camp. This camp was already a working place. It was much better. We had already washrooms inside. And there was a dining room and tables. And we had bridges, bunks to sleep. And we were I think 300 in that one barrack.

Next day, a lady arrived, and she was looking for three girls for work in a kitchen. And she picked the smallest girls from the group, and the palest girls. She picked my sister. I was always a little chubby. So she took her to work in the kitchen. And I was supposed to work in a factory.

I went to work in a factory, and we worked one week days and one week nights. My sister was very lucky and I was lucky. Because the girls who went to work in the kitchen, this lady was so good. She already knew what Hitler was doing. It was 1944. And she took the girls and she gave them all a checkup by a doctor. And she bought them clothes. And once my sister got very sick, and she sit with her all day. And she put compresses to her heart. She was so good to the girls.

And she told them the people, when they come back at night from work, whoever was there, to let them in and not to check what they bring home. And those three girls brought so much food home, so we all 300 could live. You know like my sister brought a lot of bread. Once she brought stuffed cabbage. And whoever was with us, everybody had to eat. We divided to everybody. And this was January.

February and March got so bad. We were working. The people in the factory were good to us, because they were private. As a matter of fact, one of my bosses, he told me if I get real tired, I could sleep a little bit. And if he'll see some soldiers coming to see what we're doing, he'll wake me up. He said he know because he have children on his own at home. So he know how I feel.

But in February, the war got so intense. And we were in Hamburg. And this is between Berlin and day and night, they were bombing Germany. So if you work day, if there was an alarm, you had to run to the bunkers. Once I lost my wooden shoe running. And you had to stay there until the alarm was over. Then you had to get up in the morning and go to work, no matter if you slept or not.

And then if you work the daytime, at night or you work night shift the same thing, if they bombed in the morning, you had to stay there. The city was burning. Hamburg was very much damaged. One day, it was March already. And they had to close the factory because the bombing was very-- they didn't have where to put us. They didn't know what to do with us.

So we stopped working. And we stayed in waiting for the bombs, or waiting for whoever will come in. But it didn't happen. It was April. And a rumor came that they're looking for all the Jewish girls. They want to take us out of the camp. Where they want to take us, nobody knew. So there were another barrack with Russian girls. So we mingled with the Russian girls. So they did see they could not get the Jewish girls. So they took all the camp. And they took us out. That was in April, late April.

Because they said there's going to be a big fight in Hamburg, that the Germans don't want to give up Hamburg. And we'll be bombed. We'll be in the crossfire, so they're going to save us. So we walked and walked and we came to a field. And we sit down to rest. And I'll never forget that noise, a big whistle like, a big whistle came over. And a shrapnel was throwing. They didn't throw it at us. But they were fighting.

And so many girls got hit, some never got up anymore. I was hit. I still have a piece of shrapnel in my back. We didn't know. We were in a strange country. We were on a field. We didn't know what to do. But everybody started running. And even the soldiers, they already had private-- they had already non-military suits under the military suits, because in case. They were already tired of the war too.

So we were running. And we found some kind of farmhouse. And we all went into the farmhouse. And one of the Russian girls, she took some linen, and she stopped my bleeding. And after the fight was over, we start walking. We didn't know where. But we saw so many people walking. So everybody was walking in the direction where we were thinking we'll be safe. What we do know? We were just young girls. We walked.

And there were thousands and thousands of people walking. Because all the people from Hamburg who they brought in - Russians, and Polish, and from Holland some people. And we walked. Wherever we came to rest it got night, nobody allowed us to stay. Because they said it's too close to the fighting, to the front. And one night, we went up on a big field. And it was so cold. We had some blankets. They let us take some blankets.

Wherever I came, the girls--

[AUDIO OUT]

--went and we walked. We walked. Where we come from one city to the other. Sometimes we were accompanied by the soldiers, still by the German soldiers. And a lot of times we were on our own. So one day we arrived in a little place. And on the outskirts some Polish boys were there. And they asked us if we are hungry. And we said, yes. So they went and they brought us some good food. And we had to go and stay in like a big barrack.

And we stayed there. And I got sick. I got a high fever. So the girls went, and they called a doctor. And the doctor came and he looked over my wound. And he cleaned it out. And gave me some medicine. And a German lady, she was the nurse, and she came. She lived very close. And she brought me some milk. And she told me, don't run anymore. In two days, the Americans will be here. But we had to leave next day. And my sister said, no, you won't be sick. Because if you're sick, they're going to shoot you. As long as you can walk, we'll walk.

There was a mother and a daughter. And this girl was very sick. And she couldn't move. You see, I still could walk a little bit. She couldn't move. So a horse and buggy arrived to take the sick people. And you know what? Running out of that barrack, a bomb fell. And killed that horse. And we just were so lucky that it didn't kill us, because we were so close. We were just leaving. Because I ran out. My sister didn't want to leave me there.

And we ran into the woods. That day, we stayed all day in the woods. This lady stayed there. And two days later, the Americans came. And there they were freed. I met them after the war. And she said we were so dumb when we left. But we had no choice. We had to go. But if I would be sick, I would stay there, I would be rescued three weeks earlier. And I wouldn't have suffered so much hunger, and so much running. Because the Germans went away.

And they left the houses open. So these people, they went into the Germans' houses and they got themselves some clothes and some food. And then they went back home. Me and my sister and the group, we were all together. We were walking from one city to the other, day and night. And we were so hungry because we had no food. So one day, we arrived in a camp. I don't remember the cities, because we left so many.

In this camp was a lot of, how you call it? Prisoners, war prisoners. There were Americans. There were English, all prisoners of war. And they found out that some Jewish girls came. They came to see us. They came from the Red Cross. They took care of me. They cleaned my wound again. And they brought us food. And some of them came and said, if we could stay here.

But we couldn't, because next day the Germans came again. And they said, all the Jewish girls coming. You know I had no-- they said Jewish separate and non-Jewish separate. I could go with the non-Jews. But I didn't have the conscience. I was Jewish. I went with the Jewish girls. No matter what happened, I went with the Jewish girls. And they took us again and we walked again.

If we found a raw potato, it was a holiday. Because some girls went begging. And the more courageous, they went to some German houses and ask for food. And the Germans said, oh yes, we'll give you. Because if the Americans will come, they're going to punish us. Because we did so much bad for you. So they brought some food. And we all could eat.

So finally, one day, we were most of the time in the woods. And one day, there was so much bombing and we couldn't walk. We had to stay there. And my sister, she laid down. All the time she was dragging me. She said you have to go. You have to go. I don't want you to be killed. Because they said they were killing the sick people. And she said you're not sick. You have to go on. And she laid down, and she said I'm not walking anymore. I cannot. So I had to drag her.

She was so tired already from three weeks, day and night. We walked and walked. And wherever we found a place, we slept. And wherever we found something to eat. This particular day, we arrived in a little town. And there must be a farm, because a chicken was running. And the lady who they live in Cleveland now, she was older than us. And she catch the chicken. And some of the men from Holland, they made fires in the woods. We were on the run. We cooked that chicken.

They were very helpful to us, the Holland people. The Ukrainians were so anti-Semitic, even in that, they were there, a lot of them. And they point out that we are Jews. Those are the Jewish girls. They didn't give us nothing, not a drink of water. But the Holland, men or women whoever were there, they made fires. They gave us a warm drink. And they let us cook the chicken. And after we ate, I said I'm going to rest a little bit. It was a joke.

My mother used to say in the First World War that she went to sleep with a Russian and got up with a German. And I said to the girls, I was joking. Because they said the Russians are so close, and the Americans. We have to be freed any day. So I said, listen, I'm going to sleep with the Germans. I'll get up with the Russians. And I fell asleep. And all of a sudden screaming and yelling, we are free. We are free. And this was the 5th of May. And we were free.

But what do you do? We lived all in the woods. We started walking, where everyone else walked. So we walked. You are in a strange land. You're in deep Germany. So we walked. One day, we came to a farmer. He gave us a meal. He let us sleep over. But rumors came that the Russians are so terrible, the Russian soldiers. They were raping girls, even if you had a husband. They only wanted vodka and girls.

So one day we were in a big barrack. And we slept on the floor, 10 girls together, and one young Russian came over. I didn't know how to speak Russian, but Polish. And he sit down. I was the first. He sit down over there. My sister start crying. He's going to rape you. And I said don't worry. I'll try my best. And I talked to him. We were sitting. I have a [? 9. ?] And you know he was so nice. I told him that we came out of concentration camp. I never had-- I didn't have no boyfriends, and for so many years.

And I told him my story. He said, don't worry. Nobody is going to hurt you. Because there came in some Russian. They picked the girls and walked out with them. They raped them. But this man, whoever came to our little group, he just told him not to touch us. And I saved all those 10 girls. I was lucky because I somehow talked to him. And I told him that we are only survivors. And he was really nice. He was a young man. And the next day, we arrived to Frankfurt am Main.

This city I remember. And we stayed in a house, 10 girls got together, what we survived from the camp. And we walked together. We decided to go home. So in the daytime, we were there and two Russian Navy men came over. And they started talking to us. And one boy, a Polish man from Poznan, he got to like a girl of ours, from our group. And he was with us. He was walking. He wanted to go home too.

So he stayed with us. He said, listen girls. This man will come at night. You better hide. Because they used to come in. If they knew there a girls, and shine in your face, and look and pick up whatever, whoever they wanted. So we all did go on the attic, all our 10 girls and we stayed there. And sure enough, they came. And they looked for the Jewish girls. And this man was sleeping downstairs. He said he doesn't know. They left.

They went next door and asked for the Jewish girls. So this time we saved ourselves again. We had so many close calls wherever we went. I was very lucky because I was so small. They didn't bother. So one day we walked in a big truck with Russian soldiers. Everybody celebrating, we were free. It was 9th of May. Hitler kaput. Hitler kaput. So they asked us if we need a ride. And we were happy to get a ride. We go on the truck. And they took us into the woods. They gave us to eat. Later, they wanted the girls. So one caught one of our girls. And he but we started running away. We didn't know where to go out. We were in the woods.

Somehow we went, we found our way and they left us. They didn't took us because we refused to have sex with them. So they left. And we had to find our way out. Finally, we arrived to one city. And there were trains. And they said with these trains, we can go home to Poland. And I don't know. There must be some Jewish organization. Because they had some kind of work-- I'm who. I'm who. And they led us up on the train. They picked whoever they wanted.

And we arrived back to Poland. We arrived to Poland in May. I found some people I knew from before the war. I stayed there four weeks with them. They didn't let me leave, because they said there is organizations who is going to take us to Israel. They're going to take us out of Poland. And sure enough, they took me and my sister. And we went to all kinds of cities, and we smuggled ourselves out from Poland.

We went to Czechoslovakia, Budapest, then to Italy. There I met my husband. And I got married. That's my story.

When did you come to this country?

We arrived in March, 21st of March, 1948 with my little boy who was born in Italy. He was 15 months old. And I tell you something. I was six times in Israel. I wouldn't want to live nowhere else, just here. My sister, you know I told her, I like to come to visit. But I love my America.

How did you end up deciding to come to the United States?

Well, my husband had family. And he wanted to come here. And I think I did a good-- I made a good choice. Because I really-- I wouldn't have survived. My nerves were so bad. I was really sick. And there was nothing they could do for me, because they say every August the 18th, I used to cry. I told my husband, I don't want to have any children because it was so hard when I have seen what my mother went through when my brothers died. And I wouldn't want to.

But my husband said, listen, if we won't have no children, you'll be even worse off. This way, you'll have something to do and it will keep you busy, and you will forget your troubles or whatever. It took me a long time.

I had this little boy. I didn't want to have any more children. My husband said, no. You have to have another child, because I used to cry a lot. And so we had this other baby. And then my little daughter was just an accident, like they call it. And now I'm happy I had them.

But if you see pain, and I had a lot of pain after my two brothers were taken from me, my two little ones. That I didn't even want to have any children. Then when I had my little girl, a neighbor brought a little cat. I didn't want a cat. I grew up in a big city. We never had no animals in the house. I never knew how to touch even a cat. But my husband said, let's have the little cat for my daughter. And we took that cat in. And after my daughter left for college, I got so attached to that cat. It was like our baby.

And when I had to give her up, I gave her up once. And I was sick for two days. And they still had her, in the animal-- and they brought her back. And I was so happy like you cannot believe it. But then I had to give her up, because she was really sick.

Have you talked about the war much to other people?

Yeah. I do talk. If I have an occasion and I can tell people, I cannot. Even here you cannot say you have to sit and talk for hours and hours. But I tell them the most things what had helped me mostly. Because I was a lucky person. I was not hurt badly, but for that piece of shrapnel.

I was not beaten by the Germans. I was mostly in the ghetto. In the ghetto you still had your little four walls. You went to work. You come home. Or you had to eat or you didn't have to eat. You went to sleep. At least you were in your four walls.

But in Auschwitz, you were not a person. You were just an animal. And even there I was lucky I was not beaten. The



only thing what I had to address, or they took some kind of test or whatever. And then when I was in Magdeburg, the people were good to me in the factory. Because I was so tiny, and they really felt sorry for me.

How do you think you were able to survive?

The only thing I say like my mother used to say, my number wasn't called. I didn't do nothing to save my life. There were people who were stealing, or robbing, or doing things to save their life. I never did nothing bad, like stealing from somebody. I just was going on day by day. The only time when I was real sick, and my mother was thinking I'm going to die too. But I survived.

Do you think that there's a message that you'd like to share with the world about the Holocaust?

Well, I tell you what. It was a horrible thing, especially for young kids. And for me, to see my parents die of starvation, to be taken away my two little brothers, not knowing. If they would tell you, we didn't know. I found out what they did-- they burned the people, they gassed them-- after the war. I met some people who were in Auschwitz. And they told me, you're so dumb. You don't know what they did over there. I say no, I was there.

They told me they're baking bread. I was waiting to see my little brothers. They said, don't wait for your little brothers. The message is that who knows. I have a son-in-law who he became Jewish. But he says that this can happen, because he grew up in a non-Jewish world.

OK.

When I tell him something, he always says, you know this can happen again, because he know. He was not Jewish before.

Thank you very much. This is Sara Weinberger. Our Holocaust survivor today has been Mrs. Esther Friedman. This project is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland section.