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This is Leatrice Rabinsky with Part 2 of our interview with survivor Rose Kaplovitz for the National Council of Jewish Women Holocaust Archives Project. Rose, you had just finished describing the tragedy of what happened to your brother, to your uncle, nephews, and other members of the family on that horrible, horrible episode at the beginning of World War II in your community. What happened to the life of your family and to the Jews of Sosnowiec after this initial tragedy?

As I said before, of course, after what happened to my brother, I knew that life will never be the same. But of course, little did I know that this was only the beginning of things to come. Life was becoming more difficult each day. Each day new ordinances, new decrees were passed by the Nazis. You see, it was done very systematically, very gradually.

But meanwhile, we were being conditioned. And while we were being conditioned, our liberties were being taken away from us one at a time. And with each demand, somehow the Jewish people were hoping, well, we give up one more thing and maybe they will leave us alone.

First, it was give up the gold. Then give up the furs. Then Jewish property was confiscated.

We were forbidden to enter certain sections of our city. We were forbidden to leave our homes at a designated evening hours. No Jew could travel on a streetcar.

No Jew could travel on a train. No Jew could enter a theater. It was, as I said, gradual and systematic.

How were you made aware of all of these restrictions? Was there any kind of central authority to which you had to report or to which you had to listen? How were these different demands made known to you?

All right. There was a system set up. It was, of course, the German government.

Then there was the Jewish Judenrat set up, which means the Jewish committee. And they, in turn, passed down all the information to us. There was, of course, a Jewish militia formed.

What was that?

That was Jewish police force who had to carry out the order of the Judenrat, who in turn had to carry out the orders of the Nazi government. Many times they carried out some of the orders. But when it came to big things, such as Nazi raids, which were constant, the Germans carried that out themselves. But the Jewish militia, if someone had to, for whatever reason, to report to the Gestapo or to the SS, the Jewish militia would usually deliver the notice.

How were they recognized as Jewish militia? Did they have any signs?

They had a certain kind of a uniform.

Do you recall seeing them?

They had, like, a captain's hat. And you knew. You knew a militiaman when you saw him.

The head of the unit was Moshe Merin. He was just an average citizen before the war. I believe that he took on the job really not knowing what would be expected of him. I choose to believe that he thought maybe that he could help the people of Sosnowiec by taking on the position.

You see, when they tried to form the Judenrat, they did not make an attempt to choose the most appropriate leaders of the Jewish community. On the contrary, they did not want the former leaders of the Jewish community. Because they perhaps knew that these are too devoted to the people themselves. But I believe that Merin did not know what would be expected eventually of him, of the Judenrat, of the Jewish militiamen.

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Did you ever see Moshe Merin? Quite often, he's referred to in the literature as Moses Merin.

Yes.

Did you ever see him?

Yes.

How did he look?

He was of a small stature. Nothing unusual, average man, nothing outstanding about him. I also knew one of the Jewish militiamen. Because we had to give up one of our rooms in our apartment. And another family moved in.

And it was this Jewish militiamen. He was a prizefighter before the war, a Jewish prizefighter, a wrestler, really-- and no, a boxer, right. And he and his wife and a little child that they had moved in.

So we got acquainted. He seemed to be a very nice person. We liked him a lot. But then I couldn't judge everyone just by one person.

Why did he choose to become a militiaman? And how did he become a militiaman?

I really don't know how. But it was a job, perhaps. He, too, did not know.

I mean, in 1939, 1940, how would he know what would be expected of him? He probably thought that he will perform a duty of an average policeman, keeping order or something. He did not know that by 1942, '43, things will be happening that would be horrible.

It gave him food. It provided for his family. And as I say, it was a job. And it gave him a little bit more security than to the average other Jewish family. He felt a little bit more protected.

And I don't know if other people wouldn't have done it for protection of their own family. After all, we are all a little bit selfish when it comes to your very own family.

This was taking place at the end of '39.

Right.

Would you describe the situation as far as food, as far as protection for the Jewish community? What were some of the fears or thoughts expressed by your family and other members of the community?

Well, food was becoming more scarce. Our store was confiscated. And it was reopened as a co-operative store. We were issued food cards. And you only could get so much food.

The bakeries were baking. And you had to get up at 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning and go and stand in a queue in order to receive bread. If you came too late, or if bread ran out, it was just too bad. So people sometimes stood a whole night. That was before the curfew yet that people stood all night to get a loaf of bread.

At that time, I was still in school. Until December 1939, at that time there was an announcement that from that day on, no Jewish child would be allowed to attend school. Of course, this definitely was an ordinance we thought would soon be revoked. But it wasn't to be so.

Soon my mother hired a tutor from beginning. And then our money was running out. So my sisters and I, we were teaching each other in the hope that eventually we would be allowed to return to school. But of course, this was not meant to be.

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You must understand one thing, that the Nazis understood the family structure of the European Jew. They knew of the extraordinary family ties. They also knew that this was a part of our heritage, part of our training to feel the responsibility for one another.

And therefore, when the Nazi raids began-- and let me describe some of the raids. You could be sound asleep in the safety of your home. And suddenly, the front door is smashed open. And by the time you are awakened, by the time you begin to realize what's happening, one or two members of your family are taken away.

You see, they knew that by breaking up family units, they made us as hostages. Those that were taken away would risk nothing, would do nothing to endanger the lives of those left behind, so that we all would fall in line in order to protect the other family member. So it served a dual purpose.

Many times they would issue, through the Judenrat, orders that they need 100 young women or 100 young men for labor. And it was at one time that my sister got such a notice, my sister Manya, that she was to report for labor.

This was at the end of '39 or in '40?

That was already in '40, '41 that those raids and all that--

Were you still in Sosnowiec or were you in a ghetto?

We were still in Sosnowiec. It was not a ghetto yet. We were not free to move wherever we wanted. There was restriction, of course, imposed on our movement. And we were confined to certain streets of our hometown.

So it was, and yet it was not, a ghetto. You still could take off the armband or the yellow star. First it was the armband with the blue Star of David. Then this was changed, of course, to a yellow star on the front and on the back of your chest.

You still, if you wanted to risk it, of course, risk it perhaps with your death, with your life, actually, you could remove it and go into the other sections. If you were not caught, fine. But your movement was restricted, yet you were not in a closed ghetto.

At first, we were thinking how to keep our sister at home. But we knew that by not reporting, if she would not report, all our lives would be endangered. So she had to go.

Do you know where she went?

She went to [NON-ENGLISH]. That was a street and there was a school which was converted into a durchgangslager, like a temporary camp, where she would go through an examination to see if she is fit for work. Well, we didn't want her to go. So my older sister and I, we found out that if you brew-- you know, all kinds of wives' tales went around-- if you brew very, very strong coffee, that will increase your heartbeat. And that will maybe make you unfit for labor.

So my sister and I, we brewed such coffee. And at night, we tried to smuggle ourselves through that part of the city where she was held. We, of course, were caught by the Gestapo.

And we were taken to the Gestapo headquarters. Good thing it was only in 1941. Because later on, we would never return from there.

Somehow, being so naive, I wasn't so concerned about where we're at, that we are in Gestapo headquarters. But what about that coffee that smelled awfully strong? So we decided that if we would be asked about the strength of the coffee, we would tell them we give it to her so she could dilute it, that our sister might be shipped tomorrow morning, and we want to see her for the last time.

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I don't know what kind of mercy we found. But they eventually let us go home. They told us we are after curfew and we better stay home.

So you didn't get to see Manya?

So we didn't get to see my sister at all. And she was shipped to Ober Altstadt labor camp.

Did you have communication with her from there?

Oh, yes. From beginning, we used to get postcards. But each one was so similar to the last one. She told us really very little about herself.

Of course, we knew that her mail and ours as well was censored. So you couldn't really tell. We tried to use all kinds of words to give each other signal. But it was difficult.

Because as I said, they studied the Jewish families. They studied the Jewish habits. So they knew an awful lot about us.

Don't forget that they had the SS, that was the elite unit of the Nazi party, which dealt specifically with the final solution of the Jewish question. And they had people studying us. So they knew about our way of life.

You mentioned family. Were all members of your family together in Sosnowiec? Did you have any members who left Sosnowiec at any period of time? Were you in contact with any who had maybe moved to another city or someplace else?

Oh, we had the family that moved someplace else, to a far off land, to this wonderful land of America.

When was this?

My grandfather, before World War I, sometimes. I don't recall the year. But my grandfather moved to America. And he wanted to bring the whole family out.

My grandmother did not agree. She said it's a strange land. The children might forget about their religion. She found so many excuses.

My grandfather went back and forth three times. On the third trip, he took his two youngest sons with him, hoping that she will miss them so and she will come.

Do you recall what year this was?

That must have been in 1916, 1917, something like this.

And then my grandmother said if the boat-- she looked for all kinds of excuses. She said if the boat comes to my door, I'll go. You see, some of her children were married already. And she did not want to break up that family, that strong family unit.

This is a wonderful thing that we have. But sometimes, it caused us a lot of harm, that we could not separate from each other. On his last trip, he got a heart attack and he died here. And he's buried in Cleveland.

Just how difficult it is for me to know that my grandfather died here and he could not save his family. And he so much wanted to.

Was there any contact with the sons during this period when the war had already started?

No, not from America, no. One of the sons returned back home, too.

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You see, people that came to America had different reasons. They came because of prejudice, because of religious freedom. They came because they did not have what to eat. They came because they did not want to serve in the army.

Obviously, my grandmother did not have any of these needs. Although my father always talked of America, he could not forgive his mother-in-law, because that was my mother's mother, for not going there so that we all could have been here and perhaps saved.

My father had nine-- he had 5 brothers and 4 sisters. They all perished. My mother had 7 sisters and brothers. They all perished also. Maybe some of them would be here.

Anyway, after my sister was taken away, I saw that with each one of her children, part of my mother's heart was going with her. She was rapidly losing weight, no more interested in anything.

My mother was a heartbroken, depressed lady. I think that she no longer wanted to live. But the only thing that she wanted to live for is to see her children again.

So how many of you were home now at this period?

At this period?

'40 and '41. And after my sister Manya left, my brother, Romek, was dead. My sister Manya left. My sister and kids we lost complete contact with. At home, there was my sister Tola, my younger sister Manya, myself, and my older sister Regina, who was married and lived also nearby. So our family was growing smaller each time.

In 1942, we were still living in the same house where we were. And by that time, we have been terrorized so many times. We were always terror stricken, the shock and the terror and the anguish that we had to endure can never be erased.

Was this because of the sudden round ups that you had?

The round ups. One day, the Gestapo came. And through the Jewish militia they issued order, from each household, one member has to report to a certain point. They were going to hang three Jews for something that they did or did not commit. And this had to serve as a sign to others.

Again, they tried to terrorize us. So they came. And from each household, they took away one identification card for the person to report. If not, you don't get the identification card back. So my father had to go.

That was still in '41. I was 11 years old. I was not required to go.

But we were children having so little to do with ourself. We had no school. We were looking for something to do, for excitement. And this was it. We decided we will go and see how they hang people.

We were naive, stupid maybe, childish. Don't forget, I have never seen a movie, a Western movie. I saw movies before. They were Shirley Temple and such movies.

But in Poland, if there was a restriction on age, you could not enter a movie. So I never saw a Western movie. I never saw a hanging. I didn't know what it's all about.

And I guess, like, any other child, I was curious. I didn't realize. Maybe we were thinking of, like, we're going to see a circus or something very unusual. So a whole bunch of kids from our street, we just ran after everybody and we went to the place where they were going to hang them.

And I have something that I can recall this at any time. Because standing there waiting for this to happen, not realizing

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what am I about to see, I started humming a song to myself. It was the song from the movie of that Jeanette MacDonald sang so beautiful, San Francisco from the San Francisco fire. It had Polish words and it had, of course, a gorgeous melody.

And I was just standing there like a stupid little girl. And I was humming that melody to myself. And suddenly, that huge crowd, that horrible scream came out from that crowd.

And I looked up. And there were the gallows. And the three men were hanging.

And until today, whenever I hear the melody, whenever I hear this song, I recall that picture. I see those three men hanging on those erected gallows there. And I think that will live with me forever, also.

I was petrified, terrorized. For days, I couldn't fall asleep. My father hollered at me, why did you go. But I don't know why I went, just curiosity, I suppose.

What were other restrictions at this time in the family? Your father didn't have his store anymore. What did they do?

He was working in one of the cooperative stores. But they would come to the store, the terror. Like, one day, they came and the Gestapo took my father away claiming that he was falsifying food cards, which he did not.

And all this was to live in a constant shock and terror to such an extent that we became numb to, though we did not know how to deal with it anymore. You must also remember that the way the Nazis operated, they were slowly removing the young, the strong, the healthy people from our hometown, leaving the old people and the very young ones, the helpless ones.

Did you know where they went?

They went, most of them at that time, going to labor concentration camps. You must remember that they needed that labor. They needed those work hands. Because the Nazis had most of their manpower at the front. Somebody had to run their factories.

The factory that my sister was assigned to, it was a spinning factory, of which the end product was a German uniform. So in a way, we were helping those that tried to destroy us.

What did you do, Rose, during this period as a little girl of 10 or 11?

All right. Not very much. I was just drifting aimlessly, doing nothing, trying to play with the children. But you always had to be on the lookout because of the raids.

Eventually I was assigned to work in a factory. We were making dominoes and checkers and dice for the German armies. And perhaps that was better. There were only children. The foreman and the people, the supervisors were adults.

But everybody, because you had to do it by hand, the dice were dyed black, and then we had to fill in the dots by hand each. Perhaps it was better. Gave you something to do other than just drift.

In 1942, there was still another ordinance. They proclaimed that we were to report to Punkt, which was like a gathering point at the Umschlagplatz, which happened to be a sports field.

Umschlagplatz--

Umschlagplatz.

--meant a central gathering.

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A central gathering point. It happened to be a sports field which had so many pleasant memories. We used to go there ice skating. I used to watch my brother play soccer games there.

But as long as I shall remember, I'll never forget the horrors of the Umschlagplatz. We were told that we would have our cards stamped and returned home. When we arrived at the Umschlagplatz, there was nothing there. The Judenrat members were there, just mingling with the crowd.

There were not many SS, two or three of them. They were the ones that were supposed to stamp our cards. It was a feeling of nothing dangerous. It was an easy feeling, really.

We went there. That was summer of '42 without an outer clothing. We would have our card stamped and return home. Or at least that's what we believed.

But no sooner were we gathered there, 30,000 Jews, we were immediately roped off and surrounded by Gestapo and SS. They came out of everywhere, every side. We don't know.

They seemed like they were coming up from the Earth. They were all about us. And of course, we were surrounded and kept there for the next two nights and two days.

Did you have food or water at that time?

No food and no water, hungry and shocked. At night, we cuddled together, fearing what the day might bring. Can you imagine 30,000 people standing under the bare sky, the cries and the whining of the children, of the infants, never ceased.

They cried they were cold. They were hungry. They were thirsty. How does a mother tell a child that he's not to be hungry, that he has no right to be thirsty because he's a Jew?

What about the old people? What about the sick? Once they collapsed, they were immediately removed.

Well, finally the third morning arrived. The SS issued order we were to stand in single files as a family unit, but in single files. And we had each to approach the Gestapo or the SS. We were being selected.

Did you know what you were being selected for?

Of course not. We just saw that there were suddenly different groups being formed. Those sent to the right were the young, the strong people of our hometown.

Somehow everybody wanted to go to this group. You know, in youth there is hope. There is future. But of course, none of us had the choice.

As I was approaching the Gestapo man, and as I was approaching him, looking at that huge man with that black uniform, it was frightening to me. I was so little. I was so nothing.

I looked at him. And I said, my gosh, maybe he's the devil. But while I thought him the devil, he probably thought himself God. For that day, he was deciding who shall live and who shall die.

As I said, those to the right were soon the young people. And among them, another one of my sisters. They were loaded into trucks, in cattle cars, and they, too, were shipped to a concentration camp in Germany, a labor concentration camp.

Did you know at the time? Did they mention the destination?

No, we did not know. We just knew that she went into that group. That group was taken away. And we lost sight of her.

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Those sent to the left and among them was my younger sister, my father, my mother, and myself. We were slated to be sent to Auschwitz. Auschwitz was a little town so very close to my hometown.

When you look at the map today, they practically touch each other. It was so close. Yet it was so remotely removed from us. We knew nothing of its existence. Auschwitz was the place where the great scientists of Germany conceived the death factories and invented the most efficient methods of mass extermination.

But yet at that time, you really didn't know.

We knew nothing of Auschwitz. Never heard of it. Did not know what it stands for.

We were only told that we would be deported to a different city since ours was overcrowded. You must remember that Sosnowiec, because of the location, had a lot of German people. A lot of the Polish people have become Volksdeutsche, that means they had German ancestry and they identified with the Germans.

So they were given better homes. They were given better food rations. Because everybody had rations. They had the standard and identity of a German citizen. So we had to make more room for them. And there were a lot of German people moving into Sosnowiec also.

So we were told we would be deported. And I don't know if we chose to believe it or how could we believe otherwise. Since there were not enough trains available, we were placed in three different huge buildings, which were become like a temporary ghetto. We could not leave the buildings. And from there, eventually, we will be shipped to Auschwitz.

While awaiting our turn, of course, we managed to escape. Our Jewish militiaman, who was our border, came one day into the building. And he saw my father and myself. Somehow, in the chaos, my mother and my younger sister ended up in a different building. So the family was separated, again.

He took us in the middle of the night up on top of the building to the roof. And he told us now run. We ran through seven different buildings, from roof to roof.

You just scrambled across the top?

I don't know how we made it, middle of the night, not knowing, not having an idea where. And finally we made it to the safety of our home. Now we had to search out where my mother and my younger sister were.

And through our family physician, who was also a neighbor, Dr. Plawner, we found out that they were in a different building. And he managed to smuggle them out in garbage cans. Men were coming to clean out the buildings because there was a lot of rubbish, dirt, with so many thousands of people being crowded. And somehow, they made it safely home.

What was Dr. Plawner's role in this entire process. What did he do that he had access to the people?

Well, being a physician, they needed. There were sick people who had to be attended. You see, they wanted to show that we are not going to die. So they still try to show us that they take care of the sick people. And they take care of our needs.

Because if they wouldn't show us right there and then, people probably would have raised up sooner. They would have maybe rebelled. Had we known in 1939, even, what was happening when we were still organized, when we were still united, when we were still strong, the people would have fought back immediately.

But you see, this was such a gradual thing. And we were always shocked and terrorized so that we eventually were becoming numb to what was happening. And this was the same case.

People believed that we would be deported to a different city. Maybe it would be better for us. There was always that

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hope of never believe that this is the end.

You see, we knew that people are being taken away to labor concentration camps. But they were going to work. We knew that people were constantly being killed. But it was not known to us that there was a mass plan for our extermination, so to speak, planned. That there was a plan, a genocide, final solution of the Jewish question, that Hitler had a plan to wipe out the Jewish people completely. So we sort of, like, fell into whatever was happening.

Anyway, my mother and my sister came home. But, again, my mother came with a broken heart. Our family, again, was a little bit smaller. There were only four of us left now at home from that big, beautiful family.

Was this a ghetto yet?

No. Soon after that, there was still another announcement. We would be allowed to take with us whatever we could manage. There were no moving trucks provided for us or any means of transportation. We would be placed in a ghetto.

And what year was this, Rose?

That was in 1942.

In the beginning?

No, this was in the middle of 1942, soon after we returned from the Umschlagplatz. First, two ghettos were formed, a small one and a large one. We were placed in the small one. And there were the old people and the children. But eventually, we were transferred to the big ghetto.

Now first you must understand the purpose of the ghetto. Ghettos were constructed for a better control and for a better possibility of control of the Jewish people. And for better control later when the time for the deportation to the gas chambers would be ripe. But of course, we did not know. That's why the ghettos were actually formed.

You also must understand that the structure of the ghetto was such that you could not enter or leave at will, only when you were escorted by a Nazi guard. It was a place completely unknown to me. It was on the outskirts of our city. I have never been there before.

We had to leave our homes. How does one make a decision what to take, what to leave behind, what is important, what you might need? It was a very difficult decision.

And uprooting ourselves-- don't forget in Europe we don't move from place to place as easily as here from suburbs to suburbs. You live in the home you are raised until maybe you marry.

Who made decisions, Rose?

In my home?

Yes.

My father, mostly. My mother was already a broken woman by then. She really didn't care what happens to her. She just was concerned about the safety of her children.

Two of her daughters were taken to a concentration camp. Her son dead. One of the married daughters, completely, we lost touch with her. You know, what a mother suffers, the suffering of my mom, only today I understand it because I have children.

Anyway, the ghetto, all the ghettos, for that matter, were either surrounded by barbed wire or a brick wall. It was congested. We were assigned one room per family.

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What had you taken with you? Do you recall what you took? What was important?

Some of the beddings, the furnishing was all left intact. I mean, we couldn't carry furniture. We took some of the pots and pans. We took some of the clothing.

I took my ice skates, of course, with me. That was a foolish decision. But my mother let me.

She saw that I loved ice skates so much and she let me take them. They were useless in the ghetto, of course. But I took them along.

No books. By that time already, I haven't seen a book. Books were outlawed for Jews for a long time by then already.

We were assigned we had to live in a kitchen. There were three different rooms in that particular apartment. Three families had to live there, families we had not known before. There was nothing but misery, hunger, disease in the ghetto.

Rose, just prior to that, you had told me earlier that in Sosnowiec, your community was structured so that you lived next door to Gentile people. During this whole process of the gradual terror imposed upon you and then the moving to the ghetto, what happened to your neighbors? Was there any response for them? Where were they?

Well, when all this was happening, our Polish neighbors whom we knew so well, children with whom we played, began drifting away from us, sort of removing ourselves as though we were some kind of a disease, actually. There was a mistrust. And there was suspicion constantly.

We no longer knew who was a friend and who is a foe. Some of them were giving out Jews when we were hiding or something. That distrust grew as time went along. The Polish children no longer played with us. That separation was widening.

And by the time we went to the ghetto, there was a tremendous gap. At times, it seemed like they don't care about our welfare. Maybe some of them did. Probably some did, but it was not obvious to us.

When you moved down the street carrying your meager possessions, did any of your neighbors talk to you or say goodbye?

Some said goodbye. Some did not talk. Some didn't want to see us. Some wished us well.

Most of them, I think, were just waiting to take our belongings. And they did. Some of the belongings we ourselves gave to some of our neighbors for safekeeping, so to speak, still hoping that we would return. How foolish and naive we were. How not orientated, how kept in ignorance, that we still had hope in our hearts.

What did you live in in the ghetto, then? What was it like?

In the ghetto, life was a nightmare. First of all, I lost all contact with all my former friends. I did not know what part of the ghetto they live. It was small, but it was so congested you couldn't find each other.

There was no telephone books, no directory to find each other. If you stumbled on someone accidentally, that's how you discovered where they're at. I found new friends. Some of my old friends eventually I found, too.

But I cannot describe the life in the ghetto. Nothing but misery, hunger, children, hundreds upon hundreds of children drifting throughout the ghetto with no one to take care of them. See, some of their parents have been caught during the Nazi raids and the children were left alone.

There was an orphanage in the ghetto. But of course, the children refused to go to the orphanages. For whenever there

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was a raid, the orphanage was the first place that would be cleaned out. So the children then just wanted to be on their own. Where did they live, any place, in a bombed out house, in a basement, with a family.

The German family that I spoke of, they all were taken away and just one of the boys, one young boy my age remained at home. And he sort of stayed with us. Not that we had room, because in the kitchen there were two beds.

I don't recall where we slept. I think that I slept with my mother. And my younger sister slept with my father. Because there were tiny little beds, sort of.

Even my mother and my father didn't have the privilege of sleeping with each other anymore. Maybe because they still were religious people and they wouldn't sleep with me and my sister and all the people coming and going through the kitchen. You had to enter to the apartment through the kitchen. I don't know why. But our family unit was completely broken up by that time.

Food was rationed from the kitchen. You had some food. But then you had no coal. You had no paper. You had nothing to-- even if you would get some provisions. So our provisions really consisted of very little, nothing much to cook or speak of.

Was there any medical help? Was there an organized social help?

The doctors and the Judenrat tried to form something. But you must remember, there was no medication available to us. So what medication was there was an aspirin. Doctors tried to help the disease spreading throughout the ghetto, people dying of hunger.

But of the constant raids, people began building bunkers, hiding places. But that was only temporary. Because towards the end, they were coming with their dogs. And besides, that you couldn't survive in a bunker once everybody would be taken away.

While in the ghetto, I was still working in the factory outside of the ghetto, which perhaps was better. I can't possibly describe to you the political or the physical isolation of the ghetto and the despair that prevailed in the ghetto. So going to work, living that miserable place, that horrible place, that horror place, going to work was perhaps like a running out of jail. And it was, although we were marched to the work with our SS guards, and there we were watched by the SS guards all the time, and then we returned to the ghetto.

What did you see on the outside of the ghetto?

It's set in my heart what I saw. I saw school buildings. I heard the bell ringing. And I saw children filing out of school, playing ball.

Somehow it seemed that there was still a world, that there was still a life. But I wasn't a part of this life that meant so much to me. I could not find answers to my questions why, what have I done. And often heartbroken, I would return home.

You know, I always, always questioned myself, or my parents, why? What have we as people done? Why? What have we done, again, the same question over and over.

What did your parents answer at that time?

They really had no answer. They only said God will save us. God is good to us. You will see [NON-ENGLISH]. The Messiah will not come.

They still maintained their religious faith?

Oh, the religious faith, yes. It was no longer a structure. Because our great synagogue of the city was burned the first

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day of the war. But there were smaller synagogues which were also destroyed. But people, even in the ghetto, they tried to still form a minyan. And if that was impossible, my father prayed by himself quietly in a corner of the apartment.

My father still believed that God will come down and save us. My father always spoke of America. My father had a friend with whom he corresponded until the war, of course, from America. And he always said that that's why he was so always angry at his mother-in-law for not making it possible for us to be here.

He always told us, and he always told there is a Eretz Yisrael, which was Palestine. And there is America. And there are people that, eventually, those people will hear what's happening to us and they will not allow this to happen. Well, little did we know that the world, of course, shut its eyes and ears to our suffering.

How long were you in the ghetto? And then what happened? Where did you go from there?

I was there in the ghetto until June of 1943. And the ghetto was growing smaller each day, the raids, the constant raids. Then one day in 1943, in the summer, that was in July, I believe, June or July, my father came home and told me come and sit down I want to talk to you. He was quite serious. I didn't know what my father has to talk to me.

But he said that he saw an announcement on the Judenrat building they were asking for 20 volunteers to Ober Altstadt. Ober Altstadt was the concentration camp in which one of my sisters was. And by that time, both of my sisters were.

And that was also by accident. Because both of them were in two different camps. But they needed a girl for a spinning machine, and my other sister was, by that time, already a trained spinner. They traded two girls from this camp, they sent one to that camp, and from this camp to this camp. So they both ended up in the same camp.

And my father said that's the first time they're asking for volunteers. They did not need to ask. All they had to go, run out into the street with a truck, pick us off the street, like all the Nazi raids were all the time. But they were asking for 20 volunteers to Ober Altstadt. And he suggested that perhaps I, too, volunteer.

Were you shocked?

I was shocked. I was horror-stricken. I started crying and screaming. And I thought that momentarily my father has lost his mind, sending me, suggesting that I, his child, go willingly to a concentration camp. Of course, I cried, defended myself, refused to go.

And I called my mother to help me. Because my father wants to do something horrible to me. But my father took me by my hand and sat me down and he said listen to me.

I talked to your cousin. My cousin was working in the Judenrat, also. And he told me something in confidence. And I'm going to tell you that, too.

He told me that only families with one child would be allowed to remain in the ghetto. Everybody else will be deported. This way, he said, you will be with your sisters. And your mother and your younger sister and I would be allowed to return here.

See, this way we will have contact with each other. You will be with your sisters. We will be here. And we'll be waiting for you.

And besides, it's a matter of weeks or perhaps several months. The war is coming to an end shortly. This is it. It's just so we can pull through a few more months.

Rose.

My father-- yes?

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Excuse me. I wanted to ask had you ever had any confidential talk with your father before this? Was there any point in the ghetto life that you were able to open up to each other so that you had some deeper kind of relationship?

Oh, yes. It was in those most difficult times that my relationship to my father sort of developed and grew and strengthened. You see, as I told you, we were building bunkers. That's hiding places.

Ours was in the basement. It was a narrow space that you had to descend from above. But in order to make it to the bunker when the raids were on, you had to sit guard on top of the roof. And every night somebody else from the building was assigned.

When my father was assigned to sit guard on the roof, I often went with him. Because two people had to sit in case you fall asleep or something. So I would go on the roof with my father.

And as horrifying and as terrible those nights were, they have the sweetest memories to me. It was then, sitting on the roof at night, that my father would begin telling me about his childhood, about when he was a young boy. He told me stories about his mother, about his grandmother, stories I have never known about my father.

To me, my father was always my father. He was an adult. He was never a child. It seemed to me like he never had a childhood because he very seldom had really that much time to talk to me about it.

And he suddenly, here, on top of the roof, we were sitting like a top of the world, just the two of us, I didn't have to share my father with six sisters and a brother, with my mother. I had him all to myself, just the two of us. And here I was finding out things about him that I had never known.

It was so private. It was so close. And I grew so close to my father. I was finding things about my father that I never imagined could be possible.

My father was a boy at one time. My father had a mother, too, and a father. Also, sometimes my father practiced multiplication and division with me or made me recite poetry.

I don't know why he was doing it. Maybe he was doing it to make me forget my hunger, because I was constantly hungry. Maybe he was doing it to give me hope that it's necessary for me to know because eventually life will be normal and I will need to know those things. Maybe he just wanted me to forget where I am, make it more pleasant for me, make it more normal for me.

I don't know why. But somehow, those nights have the sweetest memories to me. And I will treasure them forever.

Rose, you mentioned the bunkers and the hiding place. Did you or your father or mother or sister ever have to use those?

Oh, often. You see, as a matter of fact, one day I returned from work. And the ghetto was always situated next to railroad tracks. So whenever there was a raid, the Nazis would run into the street with their trucks, grab people, load them onto the truck, bring them to the ghetto gates, load them onto the train so that they never had to go through the city, immediately. It was very conveniently set up.

One day I returned from work and I found the building completely empty. There was no one left in the whole entire building. And since we saw the train leave the same time, I realized that there was a raid and my parents must have been caught. Or so I thought.

That night I was roaming the streets, just like everybody else. But the following night-- and next morning, I did not report to work. I no longer cared what happens to me. I wanted to be just reunited or deported to wherever my parents might have been.

But the following night, I returned. And as I lay in bed, not being able to fall asleep and petrified, I was so alone in the

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world. I had no one to turn to. No one to take care of me. I was so afraid of the future.

And suddenly, I heard faint sounds. They were coming from the bunker. And I discovered that my parents were hidden there.

You see, the bunker had a hole in the floor when you descended. And then you had to move a heavy object of furniture to cover it. And obviously, the person who placed that heavy object of furniture must have been caught by the Nazis and, therefore, I did not know that my parents were there. I was so happy to be reunited with them. But of course, this was a very temporary state.

So that even now, after having had that incident where you developed a deeper relationship, made it difficult for you to understand why your father would choose to have you go away.

My father, sending me away from him, from my mother-- but when he convinced me, and I always believed my father, and besides my father knew best. He was the smart one. Who was I? When my father tells me, I always listen to him.

So finally, I agreed. And I really don't wish to start telling, to describe you my goodbye to my mother. It seemed like she tried to open her heart and give it to me. She said goodbye to me.

Was it there in your house in the ghetto? Or did she accompany you?

Yes, my mother-- no, no, no way my father would not let her accompany. I don't think my mother would have made it even there. My father made me say goodbye to her right there and then. And we left.

I never will forget the goodbye to my mother. I saw a part of her going. She said to me, kiss my girls.

Was that the last time you saw her?

And that was the last time I saw her. My father himself delivered me that day to the Judenrat. And as he was saying goodbye to me, he had tears in his eyes.

And I said but why are you crying? Did you not tell me that I will be home soon, that everything will be over? He said yes, yes, it's true. I just hate to see you go.

And that was the last time I saw my father. You see, I did not know or realize until much later that my father must have known that the end was very near. And he tried to fabricate the story for my benefit, to perhaps give me a little more time, to give me a chance to live.

Because only two weeks after I have left, the ghetto was declared Judenrein. And all the Jewish people in our city were sent to Auschwitz, where they perished. I did not know of it. And perhaps that was wonderful.

Rose, thank you. We will stop briefly. And then we will return to find out what happened to you in the labor concentration camp.

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