

Our interview with Sara Kay, a Holocaust survivor. And this project is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland section. You were describing how you had arrived at the labor camp in Parschnitz.

- Parschnitz, and this was 1942, June 1942. And by the time we got off, there were 300 girls. And we were housed in a factory, an old factory, which supposedly there were prisoners of war from France during the First World War.

And we had beds, four together, and for on top, bunk beds. And in the middle we have tables. And on the other side, there were beds again. And the windows were factory windows. And at that time a woman was in charge of us, her name was I think Elsa Havlicik. Havlicik, I remember for sure. Or Ilsa-- Havlicik was her name. She was called the lagerführer.

Now, was she Jewish or Czech?

Oh, no no. She was German. She was German. And maybe her husband was Czech. But she was German. And she was really in charge of us, not her husband. But we were working in a Spinnerei factory, which is where you make thread. And the firm we were working, actually all of us I think were at that time were working in that factory, [NON-ENGLISH]. Because we were only 300. And this was like supposedly the last transport from Sosnowiec.

And when we got there, the people were complaining mostly about hunger. Other conditions weren't so bad. So you had to work six days a week. And you didn't have enough food. But people seemed to be all right otherwise. And they had a nice Judenälteste, [PERSONAL NAME] Schneider was her name. But on our transport arrived a woman whose name was Sala Neustatter. And she should have been German instead of Jewish, because she was not good at all.

As a matter of fact, she was as bad as the Germans. Then things started turning around from bad to worse. At first, we were called arbeitslager. Then I don't know exactly how these things were going on. We were called Zwangsarbeitslager, which means forced labor. Then we were called Konzentrationslager And in the meantime, we were getting all kinds of different things on our clothes that we had to wear.

We had the number here, and a red triangle, which meant we were political prisoners. Then in 1943, we belonged to Auschwitz, which was we got numbers to wear on the neck. We were not tattooed. But we had a number on the neck. Doctors came, and we had to parade naked. Because some of us were already like skeletons. Because if you don't eat for a year or so, and when I got there, there were already some girls there for a half a year. So some girls were there 3 and 1/2 years.

And even there were mostly young girls. Some were not so young. But the majority who got to camp were under 20 or so. Because when the Germans saw a woman with a child, they took her someplace else. But we were sent there directly. And we were working in a Spinnerei. And I don't remember. It was by list or by size. I wound up working in [NON-ENGLISH]. Because you had to have little hands, because the machines were very big and the spindles were tied together. Some machines had 130 little spindles.

And the thread came from big spools and they went through. And we were making thread. And this thread was going through a certain process. First, it came into balls of like cabbage. And we stood barefoot, and it was wet, and it was like mud. Mud is clean compared to what we were standing. In it was smelly. And we were standing in this. Our hands were rotten. I never believed my hands would ever heal up. And our feet were rotten. And after a while, they gave us some shoes, one pair I had. In the three years, they gave me one pair of shoes, which had wooden soles. And they were cut in the middle, and cloth on top.

But when we tried to walk in those shoes, they could kill us. We weren't allowed to. So even at the beginning I had shoes for walking. Because I still had one good pair of shoes, which I wore when I got there. And the camp was 6 kilometers in each direction from where we lived. So we walked in the morning, and we walked in the evening. And in the beginning, we had a man who was leading us. And there were some people who were counting us at both ends. And we weren't being persecuted while we were walking to camp.

The food was practically nonexistent. When the evening, we got a slice of bread which was for the next day. And we got some coffee. And we received containers for the coffee that we could carry next day, I suppose. And in the morning, we received what was supposed to be soup, or in the evening what was supposed to be soup. And we were supposed to carry this in that container. And the soup was most of my dishwasher has a lot more calories and a lot more taste than that soup had.

If you found a piece of potato, you were in seventh heaven. But it was still important for the people, whoever could manage to, have the food when you're supposed to survived better than the people who ate it when they got it. Because in the evening, we got sort of a meal. And it was usually kohlrabi. I don't know what-- turnips and things. And occasionally when it was a holiday, there was a piece of meat, which I understand was horse meat. But still whatever it was, we weren't very particular.

There were a few girls who didn't take meat. One of the girl's name was Jenta Mentlik. She was a little older. She already had some gray hair. I don't know how old she was. To me when I was 15, if somebody was 25, they were old. But I don't know how old she was. She was not from my hometown. And I didn't sleep close to her. And I didn't work with her either. She worked on a different floor. She was a very religious girl. She would go out in the dark and bless the moon.

But we were fenced in. We weren't in a free place. And there was a river on one side. My window faced where the river was. Besides the river, there was a fence. And because it was an old factory, it had a place with a chimney. And this is where the heat, steam heat, came to us from that place.

And this girl didn't take meat that even the lagerfÃ¼hrer, who was-- she was a rough person had respect for her. She would give her something different than the piece of meat, because she knew that. Because some girls who didn't take the meat would trade it for a piece of margarine or for a piece of bread or for something. She didn't take it, and she didn't trade it. She didn't want it.

The reason I'm mentioning her, because she didn't have a good end. In 1945, in the winter, we were in Sudetenland. And the war was coming to an end. And there was the todesmarsch going on. And we didn't have any hot water. We didn't have any coal. And we didn't work in the factories anymore. So we were in the camp, or we were digging [NON-ENGLISH] they called it, which means not foxholes, but the big--

Trenches.

Trenches. We were digging trenches. It was mostly I think to keep us occupied, and also they kept-- thought they're going to keep the tanks away. And we had SS women taking care of us then. Those SS women were the women and we were working in the factory, we had a half hour lunch. And when we ate that soup, in a few minutes we had to go to the bathroom again. So they didn't let us go to the bathroom. So many times the machines were as long as this. And in the back there were the pass was going, where the machine was running, was all the garbage that was accumulating from the yard and from stuff.

So sometimes girls would go there. And they would punish us if we go there. But they didn't let us go to the toilet either. They didn't want us to go there, and they didn't want us to go to the toilet. Because she said, you were just there. It's just an excuse to go. She said you cannot possibly need to go. You're supposed to go in the half hour. And you cannot go again. But we were barefoot and standing in dirty water. And we had a little dirty water to drink. So it went through us like a sieve in a half hour.

Anyway, these women were watching us. And when we were still going to the factory, at one time I had shoes with wooden soles, and the snow would stick on the wood. But we were supposed to go in straight. At that time we were three. And at certain times, we had more than three. But I remember the two sisters I used to walk with. There were two sisters, Manya Itskevich and Sala Itskevich. And I think Sala is not alive anymore, but Manya I think is.

And you cannot walk straight with the point, the snow. So I used to take off the shoes. We used to go barefoot in the snow. But somehow we survived that too. We survived it. Anyway, so then in 1945, it was very cold. At one time, we

heard noises. We were supposed to keep our shades down. At night we were supposed to keep the shades down. They were black. Because there was a blackout for bombs. But then they told us to keep the shades down during the day too. And whoever will come to the window will get shot.

So we took them very seriously from all the experience we had. That didn't mean very much for them to kill one of us or shoot us or whatever they wanted to do. And one time, some girls were a little braver or older or something. And I was on the third floor. And I was on the side toward the street toward the river. So I couldn't see much anyway. But the people who were to the windows on the courtyard, heard crying and heard noises.

I heard crying one night, and it was Jewish men in striped, the [? pashaki ?] what we called it, the KZ uniforms. And they were freezing. But they were inside in the building. And some were outside. And they were like sardines. And when they heard that they're in Parschnitz, a few of them were asking. One of the sisters with whom I went that was in Sosnowiec, but they weren't alive anymore. Because they were sent to Auschwitz from our camp. We belonged to Auschwitz.

And one had a cousin. And her first name was Hendel. Hendel Reich. And there were two sisters. And Hendel was the older one. She was a strong girl. She worked during the night in the factory. And in the daytime, she helped in the kitchen. And for this, she got potatoes. She had a little extra food. So she had potatoes and the skins, which was like having, I don't know what, diamonds are not that important as potatoes were. Because for three years straight when we talked, we talked about food. And the biggest wish was to be able to sit with a whole loaf of bread in front of you, to eat how much you can.

We never believed that we'd be able to eat how much we feel like, because this was just unbelievable. We're always hungry, and the stomach was always churning. So she had a few potatoes, and she threw down. The windows had a little window that opened, just a little window opened. Because it was all iron. This was an old factory. She opened the little window and threw down the few potatoes. And the minute she threw down the few potatoes, one of the SS raised the rifle. And she saw that he was raising the rifle, but she became speechless. And she backed away from the window.

And he shot. And the girl, Jenta Mentlik, who was the religious girl, the bullet went through her brain. She went to the window at the same instant. The bullet went through her brain into a bed, because the beds were four down and four up, and it went to an upper bed. And they carried her. This was on the second floor. And we had a Krankenstube, which was for emergency when people were sick.

And so they carried her through. And they made out papers, whatever they wanted to make out. They didn't say that they shot her instantly. That's how we were. And we knew that the men were on the todesmarsch, and they were burying them half alive. And the men were in worse shape than we were. And we were in Sudetenland. I was liberated May 9. The reason I was liberated May 9, the war was over May 8. Because the Russians came to liberate us.

We were in the middle of Germany, in the heart. There was no place to run from us. They had no place to take us. So we were lucky, because if they would have taken us we would have died like flies. We were so emancipated by then. We were in such bad shape that we couldn't walk. After the war, we tried to walk to the factory. I couldn't make it anymore. Here we were walking for most of the time, because at the end we had part of it was a train. But most of it we walked without shoes, and we managed. And always I felt we didn't survive on food. And we didn't survive on anything. We only survived on God's will, not on anything that any doctor can figure out.

We didn't have enough calories to live on. We didn't have enough sleep to live on. We were always in fear, and we were getting beaten. but we survived. Most of us survived, not all of us, but most of us survived.

Now, you were describing the woman Neustatter. The Jewish woman who was in charge.

Oh, Sala Neus-- she got to jail. She got she got arrested, Sala Neustatter. She became the Judenalteste.

What did that mean?

She was in charge of us. She was the one who counted us during the appell. She was making us line up. Instead of, let's say if we started work at 7 o'clock, we had time to get up, 5:30 or something. She made us get up 3:30, and count, and count, and count. By the time we were on the way to work, we were already exhausted. She did tsuris for us. She was rough on us. And why, I don't know. But it was her nature.

And also in the beginning when girls got sick, they took them to the city hospital, rather than send him to Sosnowiec. And she-- I don't know, people said that she had something to do with it. But they were pretty girls. And they took out instead of just appendix, they took out all the women parts. They didn't just take out the appendix. They took out everything. This was in Trautenau, in the hospital. They, I don't know.

But we had people who were nice and people who were not so nice.

What was a normal day like if you can say a normal day?

A normal day, a normal day was to get up and it was dark, and we would line up for the appell. And I think in the morning we lined up for something. I think maybe in the morning we lined up for soup. I think one of the foods we got in the morning, I don't remember which. And I had made not just for myself but even for friends out of old aprons that sometimes we used to get. We never had clothes. We worked with civilian women, but they were different. They had food. And they wore the right clothes. They had shoes. They had rubber aprons. So they weren't rotten through. Because they had rubber aprons to protect their clothes. They had ointment.

They weren't so hungry. So their hands didn't rot like ours. They were in better shape. And some of them were helpful to us, but not all. Some were mean. So we lined up and we went to work. In the beginning, we walked all the 6 kilometers. Our camp was on one side of Trautenau, Trutnov, and the factory was in Niederalstadt. And they had other camps there. But we were in this camp. And we had to walk very far.

So naturally, we were very cold in winter. When the time of the year was better, it was a little easier. Then we had a train for part of the journey. And we went to the train station, which was probably a couple kilometer. And then from this train station was maybe another. But it wasn't 6 kilometers in each direction. But first we walked 6 kilometers. Then we walked, worked all day long.

I was a [NON-ENGLISH], which meant I did [NON-ENGLISH]. And there were different sections for different girls. But we were watched while we were working, not just by the people who were watching the work, but SS women who were in charge of us. And the person who owned the factory, his name was Alois Haas. And it was like a joke to him. When a person said that we're hungry, because he paid for food. And somehow all the girls were smart enough to suspect that we're not getting all the food, which proved right. Because before the war was over our lagerführer said to us, you think you're going to get liberated. You think the war is almost over.

She said, [NON-ENGLISH], which means you'll have gray braids. This was the girls who were in their 20s or younger, or a little older, but no old people, all young people. So she said we're not going to get liberated. And what she did, she had what was called a magazine. And that was the food was supposed to be there. She took German women, evidently friends of hers, and they emptied it completely. There was nothing left.

For the last few days before the liberation, we didn't get anything. We had water. But we didn't have a crumb of food. And then the night of the liberation, a fire started. And here we were on-- I was on the third floor, and other girls were lower. What she did, she left a time bomb in a car, and this magazine had like a little roof. And she left it under there, because she figured if this would catch fire then everything will catch fire. There was plenty panic.

But luckily, the Russian soldiers who liberated us were courageous enough to pull it out in the middle of the yard, and the yard was huge. So the car burned out, and nobody got killed or hurt. And it didn't catch on fire. But then they found rice and things which we had never seen in her basement still, that she had cocoa and rice. And our diet was bread with a little bit, not enough bread. And black bread with just a little-- I think they I don't remember how many sections they made out of bread. But there was a little piece of bread and a soup, which was seldom any good, and coffee which was black.

And in the evening, we had a meal. If we had a potato or something, it was good. But mostly they tried to make another kind of soup. Because you didn't know what was in it. So there was kohlrabi or something. But there was something warm that we got to eat. That's how we lived. And in the beginning, we also had showers where we could keep ourselves clean. But we had bugs in the walls. They're called [NON-ENGLISH].

They're like blood bugs, and they eat your blood. And this was killing us too. And we tried to keep clean as much as possible, and wash the beds, and scrub and do things. But this was in the walls from the First World War. And this came out. So they gassed it once. They tried to kill those bugs. But this was unofficial benefits we had, the bugs.

Did you hear any news about the war while you were in Parschnitz?

At the end, there were at one place there were soldiers. I don't know if they were English prisoners or so. At one time, the men took us to a different place to go. And people were saying the war is almost over. And we never knew what date it was, what month. We just knew it was summer or winter. And we always heard good news. We always heard what we wanted to hear.

In 1945, there was a man from our home town who asked the girls, he walked by where we were walking. And he told them that he's from Wielen. So the other girl who was from Wielen somehow managed to walk where he was. And he told her that Wielen is liberated already, which made us very happy. And I was looking forward to go home. And I was sure that somebody will be home. I didn't know for sure what happened to my mother. And my mother was not 40 years old yet. My sister was seven years old when they took her.

So I didn't know. I didn't have too much hope. Because I saw how they treated us. And we were working and producing. And my father, I didn't know what happened either. But I had cousins. And from all my aunts and uncles, I had cousins. Everybody was married on my mother's side. So I thought somebody will be home.

But when I came home, the nightmare started all over again. Nobody was home. We were so happy to be alive. And it was so important. But I couldn't believe. We started signing in a book, so not only that who was home, but I knew who was with me from our city.

Now, this is in Wielen after the war.

Yeah, after the war. So I signed in her name. And then she came too. And we started going all over from camp to camp, to look for people. Two people came to camp, two men came to our camp. One was Koppel Schwartzberg, and I don't remember the other name, Bolkowski I think or Borkowski was the other name. They came. Borkowski was already married. And he heard that there is a girls camp here liberated. So he came to see if somebody is from Wielen.

And the other guy came with him. And when we said, take us home. We'll go home with you. He said, oh, no. We're men. We can go home. You cannot go home. Going home from camp was a job by itself too. And it took me three weeks before I was on a transport home. And again I was lucky, because some people were smarter than I was. We had a nurse, Kate. She was a German Jewish woman. And I don't remember her other name. We used to call her [NON-ENGLISH] Kate.

She was a professional nurse and she was smart, intelligent, and she was a good person. She went to the Czech, whatever it was called, [NON-ENGLISH] or something, which was the government at that time in the city. She got a big Red Cross. And she got papers that were sick. And we went, because we heard all kinds of stories were going back and forth already. And we went on the train. And the whole trip wasn't supposed to be that long. But it took us three days, which was very quick because we found girls who had left right the first two days after liberation.

Because we wanted to go places. And everybody said to us, don't you dare. You cannot go. It's terrible out there. We didn't know exactly what was going on. But we had a good idea what was going, on a little bit. Because when we were liberated, the Russians were like God to us. And the next day they started raping girls, who wanted to go to another camp. And they had a cousin or a sister that they knew was not far away. So we asked them to close the camp again.

And they wanted us to watch movies they were going to show us outdoors.

It was all about the war stuff. But we were afraid. We didn't want to watch. So the big people who were in charge said, we're going to lock the camp. And you don't be afraid. So we stayed. And when I left, it took us three days to get home, which was probably one of the quickest trips of anybody, because this Kate was so smart. That when the Russians came on the wagon, and they would have chased us out and taken over, she said to them that these are people-- she knew Russian too. She knew German. She knew everything. She said these are [NON-ENGLISH].

Oh, [NON-ENGLISH], what do they care? So she said it's typhus. We didn't have typhus. But when she said typhus, they were running so badly. And we took a couple other girls we found getting water. We recognized them, and that's how we got home. And behind us was, we had a special wagon, what do you call it a car on the train. Behind us was a wagon, a car with German invalids, young men who had one leg or one arm, or stuff like this. And they were still anti-Semitic then.

And they were going back to Poland I don't know what they expected in Poland. But they were in the German army. And they were anti-Semitic even then. They said they were already unhappy about us that we're alive. They wanted to be alive. But they didn't think we should be alive.

Now, you were saying Parschnitz was connected with Auschwitz.

Yes.

How did that work?

They gave us a number. And their doctor, we had doctors in the camp which were Jewish doctors, but they never stay long. When you were sick, they send you to Sosnowiec, or they send you to Auschwitz. When people got sick, they sent them to Auschwitz. We didn't know. But we knew that we belonged to Sosnowiec, and this was in charge.

And we--

Did anyone who was sick ever come back?

No. No, I had a girlfriend who was sick. And she never came back. We never heard of them. And sometimes when they wanted to punish somebody, they won't give-- in the beginning, we used to get mail. I would write to my relatives in Krzepice. I tried to write to Wielen. But I didn't get an answer anymore. Because Wielen was judenrein. By the time I wrote, nobody was there to answer. Because see, in '42 was their big thing for judenrein for this section of Poland.

So the girl had a letter from her sister I think that they took from somebody that her father was taken. So she jumped into that river. And I told you there was a river on the one side. And another girl jumped in after her, who was a good swimmer. And she pulled it out. She got her out. But she came out, she came out, she couldn't talk anymore. She had lost her voice. And everybody thought it was from the shock. But eventually she might get her voice back.

And I don't know if she got her voice back, but then she was sent to Auschwitz. And she was not the only one. People lost their mind. Quite a few girls lost their mind. Right away in the beginning, when people came, some couldn't cope and some lost their mind and were quiet, and didn't wash, and didn't comb, and didn't do anything. And some lost their mind and were very violent. They could break down a wall. Different people reacted differently.

Some people just couldn't take it. But basically we kept hoping. And we kept hoping. We did say prayers when it was yontif. We had five daughters of a rabbi. And they made a Seder. We kept trying to have some kind of normalcy with whatever we could. And we prayed. One was watching, because the machines were-- there was places in between. So one was keeping guard. And somebody had to watch your machine. And in the meantime, we did prayers and everything.

And I don't know. Somehow, I always felt God was with me. I never felt abandoned. With all the bad things we went

through, I felt a person. I never felt like I'm a second class or something like this. We just felt that this has to be over. I just waited for the day for it to be over. And it was like, it has to be over. What else could there be? But the war has to end. There was no question about it that the war will end. The question was to survive it.

We were wishing, when we were saying one day to live one day longer than Hitler. Then at the end of '45, and we were still working on the [NON-ENGLISH], and by end, I'm talking April. We were working on the [NON-ENGLISH]. And one time an airplane came and dropped leaflets. Naturally, the SS woman didn't let us collect the leaflets. But we who were going to the toilet in the woods. And somehow somebody found the leaflet in the woods.

And in the leaflet was a signature already from President Truman and Stalin. And I don't remember who it was for England--

Churchill.

It was probably Churchill, saying that they should not kill us, that they should not mistreat us, and things like this. But out of the thousands of leaflets, we got hold of one or two. But just by word of mouth, they were circulating, telling us, and it made us feel good that it's already over. But it's like you're swimming. And it's a yard to go, but you're so exhausted that you don't know if you're going to make it. We knew it's close to the end, but it was also close to the end for us.

The last time they weighed me, I weighed 33 kilo. 33 kilo is about 70 pounds. Because, this was the last time they weighed us, in April. Because when you came up to a certain point, they send you away to Auschwitz. But then there was no Auschwitz anymore. I don't know why they were weighing us. And then at the very end, they didn't weigh us even.

So we knew the war is almost over. We always kept hoping that we'll still be people again. There was no question that the war will be over. It's just if we will survive. Who will survive? We're always hoping. Everybody wanted to survive. Everybody wanted to survive. No matter what bad shape we were in, we wanted to survive. And when we survived, it was a new discovery altogether.

I went with two other girls. Because we were afraid to go alone. We said, they were two sisters, Sala Izbicka and Paula Izbicka. We said to each other, they used to live-- they had land. So they said, since I'm from the city, that maybe in the city there'll be more than on the land. So we said, we will try to be together. And if they have a place to go into and family, I'll try To be with them.

This is back is Wielen now?

No, this was in camp still. And if I have that, I'll be helping them. Somehow we were afraid to go home. We wanted to go home. And we knew something isn't right at home.

This is after the war.

Yeah, because the girls who came from Auschwitz in 1944, we had Hungarian girls come.

Into Parschnitz.

Into Parschnitz. And they started telling us that in Auschwitz there is killing, and that there are very few Polish people. As a matter of fact, one girl was always telling me, we were in the same-- there were washrooms. They were like trowels almost, because we got to do our laundry when we were allowed to in the showers. Because there were no bathtubs. And she used to tell me she has a brother for me. I used to be so angry. I used to say to myself, why does she think?

She said, you Polish people don't have anybody. We were very angry. And in the beginning, when the Hungarian girls started telling us that in Auschwitz the Polish people are dead already, the lagerführer took them during an appell,

which was counting and telling things, she told them if you're going to keep telling them these things, I'll send you all back to Auschwitz. When they came, their hair was non-existent. When I was in durchgangslager, they gave me a short haircut. But I had hair.

But when these girls came, their hair was a few millimeter long. They were shaven heads when they came to us. So she said, I'll send you all back to Auschwitz. And naturally, they stopped telling us what was going on. And we didn't work in the same factory with them. And we can really communicate with them. We didn't know Hungarian, and they did not know-- very few of them knew Yiddish. But some of them knew German. And all of them knew Hungarian. We didn't know Hungarian. But we knew German.

Most of us knew German. And most of us from Poland knew Yiddish. But somehow we got the messages through. But she told them not to tell us about Auschwitz. But somehow, we didn't want to believe, and somehow we sort of-- it was stuck in our mind that the girls didn't just invent Auschwitz. That there is an Auschwitz. And that there was killing and all that. We didn't believe the lagerführer. We believed them. But they stopped talking about it.

Are there other things about Parschnitz that really stand out in your mind?

Well, the way we were treated all these years, but especially that night when the men were there, and when they were crying Shema Yisrael so loud. And it was so cold. And they were dying. And they were being buried alive. This was the worst night of my life, the very worst night of my life.

And this was the night that the girl was shot?

She was shot in daylight. But this was at the same few days, when the men were there. I never got to see anybody. Because you couldn't go to a window on this side unless the girls gave you permission. And I had a window toward out. But when we heard the men out there, after we had the blackout for day and night, they were courageous girls who got through, knew who it was, and they opened you know where you have elevators? And when the elevators are not working, you have doors. And they open doors. And we had collected mittens and hats and scarves, and whatever we could, and threw down. Because the men were mostly naked. They had striped-- it was like a pajama.

And we had things. Because we knew how to make things. So we unfurled an old sweater, and got and made something out of it. So we were sitting, knitting, knitting, and throwing down mittens to them. But this was also if the lagerführer would have known or anybody would have known, we would be gone. They would kill us all.

And what she also did in another camp, there was the mine, the camp. So in '45, the Czech underground was already not so scared of her, and somehow they were watching us. They knew by that time there were 3,000 of us. There were girls from every country in the world by then. And we didn't work anymore, because the factory was closed. There was no coals. There were girls from France, and from Belgium, from Germany. And I had already met a couple more people from Poland. And one of them was Golda, who was my aunt's sister, with whom I started the war.

She was liberated with me, Golda Bornstein. She was liberated with me. She was older, but there was such a good feeling to have somebody. When I saw one person, I had hopes for more people. Since there were people coming from all over, I thought there should be more people at home also. When you found one, you thought you were going to find 100 relatives. You're going to find everybody. She wasn't really a relative of mine, but my aunt's sister.

So we were hoping. We were always hoping, hoping, hoping. I don't remember what I started telling you. We threw down these--

The mittens.

The mittens and stuff. And we were lucky that we didn't have to go on the todesmarsch, because there was no place to take us. And then when we were liberated, there were 3,000 girls when we were liberated. And like I said, we got, the day before the liberation, the Red Cross sent in a truck of loaves of bread. I think they send in 1,000 loaves of bread. We didn't get to those breads, because the German soldiers, they still had guns and whatever they had, and they were big



and strong. And they would come and get the bread.

And there was ammunition like where you supposed to have sewers on the long side the road, that was full with guns, whatever you wanted to have. Because they were throwing away their ammunition, and they were running toward the Americans. They realized that they're not going to be liberated by the Americans. So without guns, they were going quicker. But the bread, they took. But eventually a few loaves of bread got through. And whoever got a loaf of bread shared. So that's how we survived the last few days to have a few bites of bread. Because otherwise we couldn't survive.

And during the camp, during the time of the camp, as I said, some girls couldn't hold on to their portions. They ate them instantly. Those are the girls who died the first, or they died after the war the first. But we tried to hold one portion of bread. Because sometimes we would get punished. Why would we get punished? If the toilets overflow or whatever she wanted to do. She didn't give us food on Sunday. And to be home all day without any food was really very hard.

If you had one extra portion of bread hidden someplace, it made a big difference. Because then you could start saving up again. If you ate every day a little bit less, and you took the piece with a new piece, you could have a portion of bread. It was like having \$1 million in the bank. It was like a security blanket.

While you were in Parschnitz, did you believe that you would live to the end of the war?

Yes, we were hoping. I always hoped. I was too young, and too stupid, and too naive. With all the suffering I always felt I'm going to be all right. It was just, I don't know. When I think back today how could I believe that I'm going to be all right? But I always believed that I'm going to be all right. And I always felt God is watching us, and God wouldn't let us be hurt.

I always believed. I always believed. And I just never thought, I don't know. I was always scared and everything. And I did what I had to do. But I always believed. I was always looking forward to the liberation. And I thought, and I'll be liberated. Then everything will be good again. I thought I'll go to school, and I'll have my parents and my sister, and my family, and it's going to be normal like before the war. I didn't realize that it's never going to be like before the war.

I didn't think even hard enough, I suppose, to figure out that it cannot be before the war anymore. And it wasn't.

Now, you were saying that girls died right after liberation. What was happening there?

Mainly because we didn't eat for all these years. And when they started eating, the stomach didn't hold the food, not just girls. From my husband's experience, men died too. When people started eating after three years of being hungry, I guess, and maybe they were already at the point so exhausted where they couldn't. Also, girls who grew in camp, couldn't live either. Because their lungs were bad, and their heart didn't keep up, and most of them got sent to Auschwitz already during camp.

But nobody knew who was going to live and who was going to die everybody wanted to live. And we didn't want to live so much for ourselves, like for our family. Like when the war was over, I didn't have any shoes. And I wanted to go home. I wanted a pair of shoes. More than anything, I wanted a pair of shoes. Why shoes? I don't know. But I was ashamed to go home without shoes. But I went home without shoes. Because I didn't have any.

And then some girls had got materials. I don't know where they got them. So I cut out dresses for them. And somehow we got thread and needles, and we were sewing.

Now, where was this?

In Parschnitz after the liberation. And because the clothes were rags what we had. And we wanted to go home, because we thought the parents or somebody. We wanted to go home looking like human beings. And at one time, a man came. He said he was from the Red Cross. And he was signing up people to go to Sweden. And he signed me up too. But I was so upset because I didn't want to go anyplace but home. I didn't want anything. All I wanted was to go home.

I figured if I go home, all my problems are over. All I want is to go home.

When did you finally get back to Wielen?

In June.

Do you remember the day?

No. But it was about three weeks I think after the liberation, or maybe a couple of days more. Because girls who were on the road already that long, we took them on our wagon. And in all, it took us three days. Actually, I got back. The train went from Katowice to Czestochowa. And in Czestochowa, we already got off the train. And some girls, they were from Krzepice. So they already-- I don't remember how we found people. But we found already, I found our brother of my cousin. And he gave me 200 zlotys. He's not alive today anymore either.

And I thought it was money. But it wasn't. But it was enough for a loaf of bread. And from there, I took those two girls that we were supposed to be together, and we went to Wielen. And a friend whom I knew before the war, he and his brothers were liberated already. And he came with a horse and buggy, Moshe Jakubowicz. And his brother Helig was on the same train. So he picked me up too.

And when we came to the city, he told me where my girlfriends are, Havcia and Mala Erlich, Havcia Horowitz and Mala Erlich. And they stayed with the family, Ella [PERSONAL NAME] Holtz, and Mala's uncle was there. The Jewish people after the war stayed in one place. They stayed in a certain place, because they were afraid. I didn't realize that. But they were afraid of the Poles. So I went to them and I stayed with them too just for a little while, for a couple of weeks.

And while I was there I made a skirt for Ella. And everybody loved the skirt. And everybody was in touch with each other. So one girl came to me and she said, listen, we have a machine. And we know how to make shirts. And if you come and live with us, since you know how to make dresses, we have customers and we will be together.

I didn't know these girls. They were older than I, quite a bit older. So Ella said, listen. It's all right. You go with them. And that's how I went with them. And then I got married. And then we left Poland, because the Polish people were killing us. We didn't realize.

What was actually happening?

They were called Armia Krajowa. And they were getting money, I suppose, from England. Because the Polish Treasury was in England. And they were killing us. The main reason they were killing us, because lots of us who came back had property from the parents. And the law said that you are allowed to get the property back. You had to have witnesses who you are and so on. First of all, when we went to register, you had to register to get bread. So when we went to register, they told us in City Hall they told me and everybody else, they don't have any papers for us.

So I believed them. After all, after such a war why should I not believe? But when people went back a few years ago, all the books were there and all the papers were there. But the Poles didn't want us, so they said, I don't know you.

This is when [NON-ENGLISH] went back.

That's right. He went back just a few years ago. And the books were there with all our where we were born. But we couldn't imagine that the Poles hate us that much that they don't want us. After everything that we went through, I thought they would welcome us with open arms and help us. No such luck. They didn't want us, so they were killing us either in groups or singly in broad daylight. They killed a friend of mine, a Berkovich, Abram Berkovich.

They killed him because he wanted his parents' farm back. And the men who lived on the farm, they just took over Jewish property and they felt it's theirs. Why not? So when I saw him on a Friday, and we were getting passes to go on the train for free. The reason we were getting the passes, because like I, I went to Krzepice that day. I thought somebody

has to be alive. You just couldn't stay put. You didn't want to stay in Wielen. That was not the purpose. The purpose was to go and find other people.

And so when I came back on Sunday, he was dead already. He was in a box. The blood was out, and he was cut up by the guy who didn't want to he should take his property. I mean, his own property from his parents. And this is how eventually we got to Germany.

Did anything like that, were you ever threatened yourself?

Yes. But I didn't understand it even. I didn't realize till I left. I was walking, I was engaged at that time, and I was walking on one sidewalk. It was a different street, [NON-ENGLISH] and Ogrodowa. And then [NON-ENGLISH]. I was usually on the same sidewalk. And one time I was that close, I don't know where the man came from. He had the kind of uniform, fatigues, you would call it. And he had ammunition here, ammunition here.

And this was across from the place where the Jewish community was, where the Jewish ritual baths was. And there was a fence outside. Across the street, I saw a girl who used to live in the basement. And I used to play with her. And her name was Ginka Urbaniak.

And all of a sudden, I felt myself like I'm flying over there to her. And I grabbed her and I hugged her. Ginka. I was so happy to see her because she was somebody from before the war. But I was so startled to see a soldier like this, and I didn't know if it was a soldier because it wasn't really a soldier's uniform. I have never seen a uniform like this. But I would call it fatigues, khaki colored. And I'm sure that he was ready to kill me. But I didn't think then that he was ready to kill me.

But then they killed a man, Bornstein in the daylight on the train station. They killed a few people. One was Green. He was kind of a poet, his name was Green, and he had rimmed glasses. They killed him in Praszka. And then the last Thursday before we finally left, was they killed everybody they could find in a city called Boleslawiec. First they raped the women, and then they cut them up, everybody, the men and the women.

And somebody had gotten a warning, and they got out. And then this happened Thursday night. So we already lived already with other people then too. Nobody stayed alone.

Were you married by then?

Yes. So it's Itzik Jakubowicz. Which was a smart guy, he's a very religious quiet man. But he must have been very smart. He went outside. The Russians were going home from the front. And they slept in the streets overnight. He brought up two Russian soldiers with their guns that have that round thing, like machine guns. But you wear it like. This I forgot. Automatic guns I guess you call it. And they were sitting in our kitchen, sitting up and sleeping. And they were happy to be indoors.

And we left Saturday.

How many of you were there at that time?

At that time, there were daddy and I, my husband and myself, and the two brothers. And one other person used to eat with us, and naturally everybody used to come.

The two brothers are Itzik and Israel Jakubowicz.

Itzik and Israel Jakubowicz, because we stayed together.

How was it that you came to get married?

How come?

No, not how come. How did that come about?

How come? The girl who, the two sisters I was working with, the older one made a date for me. At first, when I came home when the boy asked me to go to a movie or something, I thought, how could he think about going to a movie or anything? And this was a quiet boy, Aronovich was his name. I'm sure he's alive. I hope he's alive.

And I said you too? I mean, he was already liberated a few months. And I was just liberated. And I didn't see anybody. And I figured what this isn't life. I just didn't know how to start living again. I didn't believe I could live again. It was another shock. Here I was waiting to be liberated. And here nobody is here to be liberated for. And everything is gone, and nobody, and nothing.

So then this girl made a date for me. And I said, you made the date.

You go, she said, I wish I would go. She said, if I would be younger, I will go. She was a neighbor of my husband. My husband also lived there. He lived in a neighborhood where there were lots of Jewish people. And Itzik and Israel Jakubowicz were also neighbors of my husband before the war. This was [NON-ENGLISH], and there was lots of neighbors were there. And their street wasn't bombed. So they were during the war neighbors too. And their house is still standing today. The house is still standing today.

So we were married. We went to a rabbi and got married. And Israel was supposed to get married on Sunday in Czestochowa. So we were supposed to go on Sunday. But when things were going on, then we didn't wait till Sunday. And also my husband was at a lawyer on Saturday morning. And he doesn't look Jewish. And the lawyer had a big dog for protection. I don't know exactly why. And a man came in who was either the chief of police or somebody. And he said I received a note not to mix in whatever happens with the Jewish people. He said, and I'm not going to put my life on the line.

I'm not seeing or hearing anything. So when we heard this Saturday morning, we left Saturday afternoon. We didn't wait till Sunday. The one night, like I said, we had the Russians sleeping up there, sitting on the ground. And this is how we got out. We had more luck than brains. Lots of things happened to me that I don't understand how they happened. But I guess when you're supposed to live, you live. You have a lot more luck than brains I had, a lot more luck.

How many of you left then?

At that time, it was Israel had a fiancée. We left in two-- like we didn't go together. We were afraid to go together. And it was called dorozka, I don't know-- a carriage, that took you to the train. The train was a little bit out of town. And in the daylight, we had the hood-- the thing up, so it doesn't show. And we had one little suitcase, because we were afraid, we shouldn't even have taken that. We were afraid. And we left everything unlocked.

And then my husband and Itzik went back in the daytime. And then they broke dishes and stuff that we had. We didn't want to leave anymore things, just every time, pick up and leave, pick up and leave. And I said, all I want you to do is put everything together and break what you can. It was why you leave every time everything for somebody else?

And where did you go then? And we went a little bit to Lodz because it was a bigger city.

First, we went a little bit to Czestochowa. And then we went to Lodz. And somehow there were rumors always that from Lodz we could get to go to Germany or someplace. We didn't know where. We were talking Israel. We just wanted to get out already. It wasn't safe. And Wielen was completely unsafe. And in the bigger cities, it was much safer. So somehow, we wound up on a transport. I don't know exactly how we wound up on this transport. And we thought we were going to be going to Israel.

But we wound up in Vienna, and then we wound up in Germany. And in Germany, we were in a camp near Munich. And it was what they call it the DP lager. And I had already such a bad feeling about camps, and there were rumors that a couple of young men from our home town were living in the city of Munich in a suburb, not in a camp. So I said, oh,

if I could go to see them or something, I just-- I didn't want any more camp.

Because wherever we went, it was camp. And the beds were top and bottom and four together, which made eight. And eight here, and eight there. And I just-- I wanted to be in a private place more than anything. I just couldn't think camp anymore. It was like no more camp for me. I'm liberated. And I didn't want any more camp. So when we got to those two young people, they were very nice to us. And they told us that a cousin of mine, also from the Lipszycs from Vienna and Heniak Lipszyc is in charge in a city named [PLACE NAME].

And he actually when people come, he actually has a place for them to live. And we wouldn't have to live in camp. So we said, we'll try. But after the war going places was not the easiest thing, to where it should have taken you two hours, it took you two days.

Let me ask you. How do you think that the whole experience of the Holocaust and having gone through that, how does that affect you now?

Well, I look at life differently. I don't take anything for granted. And I don't trust things either. I don't trust things. I hope things like this never happen again. But the German people who were at one time civilized and educated, and if they could put up signs, [GERMAN] and if it was legal to kill and if it was legal to take everything away from everybody, then I just can't trust anybody anymore. I just don't believe that anybody is safe anymore. I don't feel that the war ever ended. To me, it never ended.

I consider myself lucky that because we had such experiences that we knew most of the time what to do. We knew exactly what we wanted. And we knew what to do. And we were lucky. And we were lucky because we were young and we were industrious. But we were lucky because of many things. But there are times where I don't feel that. I hope nothing ever happens in my lifetime. But with so much terrorism and all this, I still think all of this is part of what was going on from the Germans.

The Germans taught the Mufti and they taught the Arabs. And they were very intelligent people. And when the Americans liberated us, they also took-- when we were in Munich already, the big shots, they came to the United States because they knew so much. They knew with the V-2 rocket. They were useful. And some of them may have been Nazis, and some may not. But it wasn't just the Nazis.

When they gave somebody Jewish property, he didn't have to be a Nazi. He took it. He wanted it. He got it. When he was German, he didn't have to be a Nazi.

How often do you think about the Holocaust or do you talk about it?

I hope less and less. But this morning, I dreamed because I knew I'm coming for the interview, so I didn't have such a nice dream this morning. And whenever something comes up, I have very strange dreams. Dreams that didn't even happen I have. One time I dreamed that all I have to do is go over the fence. And there were Germans in different uniforms on one side, and a different uniform on the other. For some reason I felt if I'll be with the other uniforms I'll be safer.

And it really one was just the gendarmerie uniforms I was dreaming about, and one was the other uniforms. But I never had to go over a fence to be safe. I just like this, but that's how it happened.

OK. I'd like to thank you for coming down. My name is Abraham Kay. And today we've been interviewing Sara Kay, a Holocaust survivor. And this project has been sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women.

Thank you.