

I'm Sally Weinberg. Today, I am interviewing Sandra Mandel, a Holocaust survivor. The project is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland Section.

Sandra, we will start again where we left off. You were on the way to Auschwitz. You were just departing from the transport. And you told us, with tears in your eyes, the situation as you saw it. Could you continue from there?

Yes. That was a Friday evening when Mr. Gross lit the candles. And we were staying and praying.

Was this right in the train station?

It was still on the way going before we arrived to Auschwitz.

It was in the transport itself?

In the transport, on the road, as we traveled to Auschwitz.

You were off the transport?

We were in the wagon.

In a wagon?

In the train wagon, or so to speak, the cattle cars, that is what they transported us, in cattle cars. Shortly after, the train stopped. It was in the middle of the night. Must have been early in the morning, maybe 3 o'clock in the morning when finally the train stopped and the doors opened up.

And there were soldiers there. There was dark there. And they told us to get out. And whatever package we had in our hands, we had to leave there.

And they separated the men from the women. And immediately, they put the men to one side, and the women to the other side. That is the last time I saw my brother, so to speak. He immediately was taken away from our group to the men's side. And we hope to see him somewhere. We didn't know that we will never see him again.

And here we are, standing in the line, under the big floodlights saying Auschwitz. And--

There was a sign that said Auschwitz?

Auschwitz.

Did that name mean anything to you--

No.

--when saw it?

Nothing. Just the station, I thought. And there were men in striped uniform helping us line up, telling us-- first, when we saw the striped uniform, we were sure we are in a prison camp with murderers because that was the sign of a striped uniform. And we said, oh, my goodness, where we? We are not murderers.

But soon we found out that the striped uniform men were Polish Jews. They spoke Yiddish to us. And they kept on telling us, hey, you are very young, don't hold that baby in your hand. Don't you have your old mother here? Let her hold the baby in her hand.

And, of course, many of them didn't give their babies up. We didn't know why they said that. And many of them did. Here, Mom, hold the baby. This man said I have to give you the baby. And this woman survived. These men knew where the babies and the mothers are going. They went straight to the crematorium.

From that point?

From that point, that is where they selected us. We had Mengele there. Dr. Mengele was there welcoming the transports.

Did he say his name?

No. But we-- later on, he came to inspect us in the barracks where we lived. And they told us, this is Dr. Mengele. And, of course, we remembered him from the station when we arrived.

What happened to you at after the selection?

Well, they pointed to some people to the right and some people to the left. My mother, my sister, my two sisters went to the right. And it was a road type of thing, an alley, where you go. It was dark.

You did not go with your mother and your sisters?

No. They shoved them to one side. And he looked at me. And he said, you are a big girl. And he shoved me to the other side. I looked big enough to live. And the other ones went to the other side.

In fact, at that moment, I was the only one who was shoved to that side because too many went to the other side. And I came back. I said, I don't know where to go.

By then, my mother was away. And I didn't see her anymore. And somebody else showed me, see, over there, there are people in that row. You just go over there, and you'll find them.

Soon I found my friends from my community. And I hitched on to the row. And we walked.

Not on your mother's side?

Not on my mother's side. I didn't see her anymore. That was the last time I saw her.

I have a sister. My sister was 16 years old. She was a beautiful girl. But she was holding on to a little girl who was limping, her friend. And so they decided to let them both go to that side. Somehow I was selected out to live.

And as we walked, they took us to Birkenau, where they gathered us in a big room. And the German officers, the SS women, could not communicate with us. We were Hungarians.

So what they did, they took Polish Jews who spoke Hungarian. Those were there already four years in camp. With the Polish Jews, they built Auschwitz. They took the Jews to build the barracks and the fences and the crematoriums.

And then, they were the ones who welcomed us and told us what to do when we got into Auschwitz. This girl will come up and spoke Hungarian to us so we could understand her. She hollered until she got hoarse. Take off your clothes. You are going to take a bath. The only thing you keep with yourself is your shoes.

And, of course, we looked around, and there were soldiers, German soldiers around, both sides, with guns. And we were waiting for them to march out of the room. Why would we undress in front of soldiers? And, of course, she kept on repeating herself, you know.

And she said, you are in a place where you do not ask questions. You do what you are told. And take off your clothes.

So we soon found out that these soldiers will not move. They will stay there. So we had to drop our clothes and hold on to our shoes and march. We marched into a room, in a corridor type of room, where there were a lot of tables and a lot of Jewish workers, who cut our hair, immediately, that was the first thing, clipped off all our hair, shaved all our hair from our body. And--

Was your head shaved or just clipped?

Clipped. And they told us we're going to take a bath. We were lucky because we did take a bath. Later on, we found out that our parents were not as lucky. And they did not take baths when they went in into the shower room. They were gassed.

But we took baths. And it felt very nice. The warm water was so beautiful after such a horrible trip. And we hope we're getting back our clothes.

But after the bath, we picked up our shoes. And we walked out. The bathhouse was a very unusual bathhouse too. It was a shower room with probably 200 showers in it. It was designed for a mass, for people who take showers, so at least 200. I didn't count them, but at least that many in that one room.

And after the warm water stopped, we went out in another door, where there were tables with black sleazy dresses. I never saw so many black dresses in my life. They threw us a black dress to put on our wet body.

Oh, you had no towels?

No.

To dry off.

You don't need a towel when you are in Auschwitz, but you need a bath because the Germans are very clean people. And beside that, they were afraid of an epidemic. You had to take baths and disinfect yourself. That was a very important part in Auschwitz.

And, of course, I was lucky, the dress fitted me. But I know, I remember a heavier girl who came back to say I can't fit into this dress. Give me another dress. They said, go trade with somebody whose dress is better than this.

So it was a rough morning. By the time the sun came up, we were finished with our bath. And they threw us out in the open.

And we looked around. We didn't recognize each other anymore. We didn't look the same. And from our voices, we realize that, oh, that's Magda, you are the one. Hey, sure, I remember you, Sandra. You are from my community. And we laughed and joked and cried at the same time.

But here we were, and said, did you see your mom? Is she here somewhere? Is my sister here? Of course, we didn't see them. But we said, well, maybe we'll find them somewhere because we came together on the same train.

But that wasn't the case. And, of course, they lined us up, five in a row. That was the procedure in Auschwitz. You count people five in a row. It's easier to count them that way. And we marched.

They took us to C camp.

C?

C camp.

The letter C?

The letter C. They were marked according to the A, B, C, I guess. But that was very good camp, so to speak. It was well equipped.

With what?

It had barracks. And the barracks had three rows of bunk beds. The bunk beds, if you think of a bunk bed is one bunk bed for a person. One bed for a person.

Bunk meaning one over the other?

One over the other. These beds were as wide as I would say a double bed or a king size bed, let's say, the largest. And there were three, one on top of the other. 14 girls slept in one of these bunks. There were no blankets, no pillows, no covering.

We were packed like herrings, seven in a row, seven in the other row. Feet to feet, meeting feet to feet. And that's where I stayed for four months.

Life in Auschwitz was to degrade the human beings. They handled us like animals, cooped up in the barracks. We had to learn to train our bladder, train our thoughts, and train our stomachs to accept unappetizing food. And it was very hard to do that.

We had a lot of questions to ask. We had a leader, a young Polish girl, who was very rough. She had to be rough with us. We were about 1,000 women in that one barracks.

Did you all speak Hungarian?

Yes, this was a Hungarian transport.

And this Polish woman spoke Hungarian to you?

Yes. We had two leaders over there. There was an elderly lady and this young woman. The first one who was our leader couldn't take us. They changed her to another one who was stronger and said, I am talking to you, and you have to be quiet. You got to listen to me. We are in a place where you don't talk, you do what you are told. And that's all you can hear from me.

And we had to be very quiet because that's what it was. And, you know, strange as it may sound, as they selected us, the men, some of the men who came in our transport were also in the same camp, but in the opposite side. See there was a road between in the camp, between the two barracks, two rows of barracks.

My brother was in one of the barracks. And one of my friend's father was there, who was an older man. And he didn't go to concentration camp-- he didn't go to forced labor camp. And he came into Auschwitz. And she went to meet her father. And I went along with her. And I met my brother, just for a moment because there were so many people there watching him and hitting us if we went to the other side. So we just briefly saw each other.

And three days later-- there was too much confusion over that-- three days later they marched out the men from this camp. And they fill that with new transports, with new women, who came in transports. Transports came in to Auschwitz almost every day.

Was that the last time you saw your brother?

That was the last time I saw my brother.

Did he-- did you discuss where your mother and sisters were?

No. There was no time, no place to discuss. I know the father of this girl, Sylvia Blau, who told her that we'll meet at home. I'll come home. And you go home when the war is over. And he had to leave.

How long were you in Auschwitz?

I was in Auschwitz for four months.

And what kind of work did you do? What was your daily life like?

In Auschwitz, you didn't do anything. That was the worst thing. They did not take us there to work or to do something. That wasn't the purpose of Auschwitz.

And we, who were still alive, they kept us there for a reason. You see, they needed workers in factories. It was almost the end of the war. This was 1944. And they thought that they can still have some use out of us.

Their men were in the war, the Germans. And they needed ammunition. They needed production. And they took us to these factories to work for them.

From Auschwitz?

From Auschwitz.

You left Auschwitz--

They selected transports. But you know, they did all kinds of selections over there. At one time, they asked girls over 16 to sign up for work. But they needed just that many for that particular transport. Those were the ones who were tattooed. I wasn't tattooed. Only those who left Auschwitz were tattooed.

You never knew the reason why they did anything over there. You see, soon after we arrived there, we had Zaehlapells.

Had what?

That means-- Zaehlapells. That means counting. Twice a day, they had to count us, make sure that we don't run away. There was no way to running away. Our camp had tall barbed wire fence. Plus, it was electrified. Nobody could go close to that fence.

They had a barrier type of row that you're not allowed to go there. But I remember I witnessed once a girl whose brother from the opposite camp threw over a package to her. And it caught on the barbed wire. And she went to get it. And she was electrified. And she died holding on to the camp-- on the fence, she was hanging on the fence.

Immediately, there were whistle blowing. And they shoved us quickly back into our barracks so we wouldn't see it what's happening. And, of course, we knew at that time that it is very dangerous to go close to that fence.

Were you told not to go near the fence?

Yes, definitely. Like, for instance, they will select-- they will call at one of these Zaehlapells, one of these counting sessions, they will select out the older women who they didn't see, they missed, they skipped at the time we arrived, and younger looking children. And we never saw them-- I remember a young girl. She was very fat. She was selected out from the group, pointed out. She's going to another camp. We never knew why. We never knew where she was going.

Were you, at this point aware, of the extermination going on at Auschwitz?

No. I remember an incident in August when the roof was leaking. So men came to fix our roof. And we asked him, did you see our parents? Did you see the children? Which camp are they? We were sure they are here somewhere. They came in to the same station.

And he said, well, don't you think about them anymore. They are dead already. You know? And he spoke in Yiddish to us. We almost clobbered him. We didn't want to believe him. He's only scaring us. We didn't want to believe such cruelty exists. Why would they be killed? Or where?

But there were a lot of them who knew the truth. And there was nothing to talk about. And we hope it is not true. Deep in ourselves, we knew that it is a bad place to be. But we didn't talk about it. And we only hoped that it isn't true.

What kind of food did you receive? We got one meal a day. And it was some kind of a mush, you would call it. It consisted of barley, some vegetables, and once in a while a little bit of meat in it, bits of scraps.

And we have our pharmacist's wife from my community. She was with us. She was my mother's age. But somehow she's very skinny. And she came in into our group.

And she ran around telling us girls, listen, I analyzed the food. And this food is pretty good. As long as they give us a food that is nourishable, you got to eat it. Nobody could eat that food. It was so salty.

They put something in the food in the kitchen, later we learned, so to stop our menstruation. I don't know what kind of a additive it was. They call it brome. I don't know what it was.

Did that work?

Apparently, it did because nobody had a period during the time we were there. In fact, a young woman said, I am pregnant. And so we finally figured out that she wasn't pregnant. But she wasn't the only one who skipped her menstrual period. And, of course, I said before the Germans liked us very clean.

In June, we were marched to go to Birkenau, again, to take a bath. Once a month, they gave us a bath.

Birkenau was close by?

Close by. Apparently, that is where the crematoriums were. Because this is the railroad station, brought the people, they processed them. And then they met their destiny somewhere.

Whenever we went to the bath, to take a bath and disinfection, it was called to disinfect yourself, not to take a bath. They will sprinkle powder on our head. So some kind of a powder to clear us from lice, or whatever, and then go to take a bath. Used to throw in our clothes, our one dress.

And you never got back the same dress, of course. At one time, I got a blue dress with an open back. It was a torn back. And, of course, it was summer. So it didn't matter. In the daytime, it was very hot. In the evening, it was very cold in Auschwitz.

But it was kind of a life that we lived there. In the morning they will wake us up at 5 o'clock in the morning to go out and prepare to be counted. The preparation was to go to the washroom. They had a washroom with faucets running for a whole hour. It was a rusty water.

And they told us 100 times not to drink that water because it is contaminated. It's only good to wash yourself. And you had to wash yourself, of course. So you sprinkled water over your face. And you rinse your mouth with it. And that was the time that you were allowed to go to the bathroom.

And opposite this barrack-- they assigned a barrack for these cleanliness. And the other barrack was the toilets. Over there too, probably 200 people fitted in at one time. They had cemented platform with holes in it. And so you went to

the bathroom and--

With 200 other people at the same time?

Yes, of course. It was one barrack at one end assigned for this. And in the other end of the camp was also another toilet and another washroom.

That was 5 o'clock in the morning. It was cold and the cold water and hungry. And then they let us stand outside until 7 o'clock when the SS will come and count us.

And at that time, they will serve us some kind of a breakfast. It was a liquid cereal. If they would have given it to you in one bowl for each person, well, we battled with it. But they gave to each row a pot. You drink a little bit. And the next one drinks a little bit. And the one who was very hungry said, hey, you took two drinks. And, of course, it was very rough. But we had one good meal a day, as I said, the barley soup. And that was at noontime.

In the evening when they counted us again, that is when they gave us a slice of bread. It would have been easy if they sliced the bread in that kitchen and gave each one a lump of bread. They did not do that. They gave one bread to a row of girls.

So five girls had to divide the bread. We didn't have a knife to divide. We just looked at that bread. Somehow, we got a hold of a knife to cut our bread. And it went from row to row to cut, slice our bread.

When new transports came and we saw them dressed up so beautiful-- I still remember when Budapest, people came in from Pest. And we heard them speaking Hungarian. So we started hollering, where are you coming from, to over the fence.

We were outside at that time when this transport lined up. And we saw them dressed up so beautifully. And they told us, we come from Budapest. Oh, yes? Do you have a knife? Throw us over a knife. That's the only thing we ask from them. We knew that they cannot-- they will be confiscated from them, everything.

Lots of them looked at us, oh, these are crazy people. Look how they holler. And they really didn't look like normal-- we didn't look like normal people anymore, shaven and black dresses and torn rags and hollering and crying and talking at the same time. And those people didn't want to believe us that we are actually normal people. But some of them said, hey, these people are asking for something. And a lot of them did throw in knives to us. And this is how we had knives to cut our bread in the row.

What did you do from the time you had the breakfast until the evening, or noontime?

They kept us in the barracks on your bed. They wouldn't let you go out. They didn't give you any work. And that was Auschwitz.

And, you see, had plenty of time to think of your dear ones and just think and do nothing. And that was the worst thing. You just couldn't do anything.

Did you lose weight, do you think?

Yes. We were skinny to the bone.

Did you become ill at all?

I was lucky. I don't know why. I was skinny and apparently very strong because I did not get sick. I mean sick not to be able to stand up in a row, because a lot of girls taller than me and heavier and stronger looking, so to speak, will faint in the row until the SS came to count us.

It happened already that it was a rainy day. And it took longer for him to come. They let us stand in the rain. And we still had to stand up straight when he finally came with his raincoat on to count us. It happened already. He didn't count right.

Or some sick people couldn't come to sit outside. They used to put down the sick people in a row to sit down with a blanket. They couldn't stand up. They also had to be counted.

And for some reason, it was miscounted. They called it off again. And they asked us to stay longer because they had to recount.

Were you ever beaten?

It was a torture. Well, I avoided the beating.

Were any of the other girls--

Yes.

--beaten? For what reason?

If you got into somebody's way, in the middle of the day-- this is why they kept us closed. They didn't want us to see the transports coming. They didn't want us to talk to them. So that's the main reason they kept us locked up.

And many of them ran out. I was one of them who ran out a lot because I just couldn't hold so long until they allowed you to go to the bathroom. And I just had to get out. And I remember I ran into my-- Stefka, Stefka was her name, the girl who took care on us.

The Polish girl?

The Polish girl. And she said to me, where are you going? Don't you know over there they are going to kill you? And I said, I had to go. You better-- I managed to run out. And she slapped me several times for wanting to run out. But otherwise, I avoided her. And I avoided everyone else who had anything in their hand to be able to be slapped.

Did you have any kind of religious service at all in the barracks? Were you able to do anything together in any religious form?

No. We only prayed within ourselves and quietness. You see, in July, they decided they're going to bring the disinfection project here into the camp. For some reason, they didn't take us out of the bathhouse. But once a month, they had to sprinkle powder on us. And they had to do something so we don't get sick.

So they brought some equipment into our camp. And at the washroom, they washed and they dry cleaned our clothes. They put it in some kind of a machine, like a washing machine, a circular washing machine that tumbles, and with some powder in it or what. And that's called clean. And we got back a dress here and there.

You say you were in Auschwitz for four months. How did you leave? And when?

After the four month, a lot of things happened in Auschwitz, like unusual sign-ups, never knew where you go, unusual Zaehlappell. They counted us extra in the middle of the day once. And you had to just march back into the barracks. Nothing happened.

We had Mengele came once in the middle of the day to count us. And I had a friend who had an allergy. And because of the food she ate, she was all broken up that day. And she said, oh, I am terrible afraid he's going to take me out from the row, and I don't want to leave you girls.



And so she tried to explain him she has an allergy from home. She doesn't have the medicine what she used to take. And he said, I know. She doesn't have to explain it to me. And he let her go.

Now, this was an unusual thing for a doctor like him to let her go. She was all broken up like with measles, you know. And here, he decided to let her live. She never came home, of course, in the end of the war. But that one instance, he let her come back with us into the barracks.

Another thing happened in Auschwitz in my barracks, a baby was born there. That was an unusual case. And it was in August. They had to report the baby was born. And the SS woman came.

They were not aware that the woman was pregnant when she--

Well, she was hidden by every one of us. We knew that she was pregnant. But nobody-- so we managed to hide her where she wasn't selected out. But after the baby was born, the SS woman came. And--

Who delivered the baby?

Well, there were some women who delivered the baby. We only knew in the morning that there is a baby. We all went to see the baby.

And when the SS woman came, she said, it's a beautiful baby. And what name are you going to give the baby? And she was very kind. But next day, they moved her. We never know where to.

The woman and the baby?

And the baby, yes. They moved them together. I don't know if she came home.

You mentioned that Dr. Mengele was at this barracks, at this camp.

Yeah.

Were you ever examined by him?

Well, the only examination he gave me, he told me I'm a big girl and I should go to the left. You see, later on, I learned that he was called the Angel of Death. He had that power to send people to the death chamber or to live. There was no reason why one should live and one should die.

It was just a selection process. This group goes there. This group-- besides they didn't have that much room in those crematoriums at one time. So they had to start with the older people and the younger people. I don't know what their destination-- what their plan was with us exactly at that moment.

But in September, I have to mention one thing, we got quilts in Auschwitz. In August, a lot of rain was going on. And Stefka, she told us we're going to get blankets. Isn't that a good thing? The Germans are giving us blankets. So the blankets came in. It was quilts.

And everyone got one quilt. So we had to decide, put the quilt underneath or put the quilt to cover us? So I think we decided to cover us with the quilt because it was cold. And we were used already to the hard boards. So--

There were no mattresses?

No mattresses. That was too good for us. But anyway, as I said, many selections happened in Auschwitz. And this one time in September, September the 6th, when there was a big selection, they looked for young girls with good vision. And I fell in into that selection.

I said I have a good vision, and I did a lot of embroidering at home. And they selected me for that. And a lady from my community asked me to tell him that I can't see and I used to use glasses and things like that because you don't know where they're going to take you.

And I figured I was already selected out. My parents, my brothers, my sisters nobody was there. So there is no good reason for me to stay here. Wherever they take me, it won't be worse than Auschwitz. And I didn't listen to her because I figured I cannot do anything to mold my destiny. I will just have to tell them the truth. I have a good vision. And they selected me into this transport.

What happened? They took us into another camp across the street from this one. It was called Camp A. And it was a more modern camp, a newer type of barracks. These barracks, once upon a time, were horse barracks.

Over there, they had like a ranch type home, everything on one floor. The windows, we had windows. These barracks did not have windows. They just had big gates like in a stall. They were horse barracks. So we said, maybe this looks already better.

How many did they select?

They selected probably 400 or so. But over there, we got a test. They actually tested our eyesight. They brought from the factory-- later on, we found out they were engineers from a factory. They needed workers. And they came down here to select. They had a very large selection here. They could pick whatever they wanted.

And we had to count. They had brought along some little gauges, maybe 2 inch big. And tiny little lines were in this gauge. We had to count them, how much we see in a certain amount. I don't know, centimeter or so. Apparently, I passed because my vision was very good at that time. And to today's day, I really think I have to thank to my vision that I'm still alive.

And while we were there, in this A Camp, nothing happened. They were giving us food--

Better food than you had before?

I don't think it was better. But we were used to that food already. So that's what it was. It was food.

It was an unfinished camp. Windows were not put up yet. It looked like they were still working. They didn't have barbed fence around this camp. We felt a little more free in this camp. But it was a temporary place.

And after a few, let's see, about two weeks, in September 11, they said they take us and give us a bath. So they took us to--

This is 1944?

1944. It was in September 11. We took a bath. And to my surprise, they gave us underwear.

Oh. Before that you had no underwear?

I just had a dress. And I got a nice blue dress. And I felt kind of dressed up. And they also gave us food for the road.

Were you aware at this point-- this is 1944. Were you thinking about the war? Did you get any news about what was happening at all?

No news came into Auschwitz.

So you knew nothing about what was happening with the war?

We knew the war was going on. But we did not know how far they are and where they are.

You never heard any bombing or any noises or anything?

We heard planes going by Auschwitz. When we were outside, we prayed and hoped a bomb is falling down here. How come nobody knows about this God's forsaken place? Nobody bombs Auschwitz? If it is a war, what's going on here? Somebody should know about it.

We used to holler up to the airplanes. Apparently, there was their own airplanes. We never knew what was going on what we were there.

And here, as I said, we were dressed and ready for a trip. They put us in a cattle car again. We didn't know where we are going. They didn't tell us.

But we were the 250 girls were selected out of the 400 to go to this particular factory. And we traveled for a few days. And in September the 12th, we left Auschwitz, 250 girls. And on September the 14th, on a Thursday, we arrived to Hatlerdorf.

How do you spell that?

H-A-T-L-E-R-D-O-R-F. That's a German name, Hatlerdorf. Dorf is a village. And we got there during the night in the evening. And it was dark. And the SS women were waiting for us. We came along with SS personnels from Auschwitz who will be in charge of us during all our stay in that factory.

And the transportation for us from the railroad station to the factory was probably 4 kilometers, I would say. We walked. The only thing they were very surprised when we got into the factory, they asked us where is your packages? Where are your packages? Your clothes? Your packages?

According to those people, we supposed to have packages. And I said, what packages? We have with us, we were glad we had underwear and a dress. Those people didn't know, not know about Auschwitz. Everything was done in such secrecy.

Were those people, the local people?

They were local people. These were-- this was in Czechoslovakia, , a factory called the Lorenz factory.

Lorenz?

Lorenz. Used to be a radio factory. And during the war, it was transformed.

Did you, at that point, start to work in this factory? They taught you something there to do?

Yes. It was like piecework, but easy to learn. I was given a stove to operate, an electric stove, where-- it was a stamping place where we stamped down little glasses with tubes. They looked like little tubes, glasses with tubes. Later on, it went upstairs where they added some kind of wires into it.

We made parts to some kind of a bomber. And this was a factory designed for that. And they needed-- young girls could do things like this, you know.

And where did you live? Where did they have you living?

Our living quarters was on the third floor of the factory. They took the attic. And they fixed it up with bunk beds. But this time, we had one bunk to each girl. They actually treated us like human beings. And we had two blankets and a pillow on every bed. And coming from Auschwitz, this was heaven to us.

And, in fact, we bunched up next to each other. We figured they would probably put two of us in a bed. How is-- such a good thing couldn't happen to us to put one.

And so the SS woman comes, what are you sitting two on a bed? One to each bed. Oh, we looked at each other. Hey, that's fantastic. Each one had two blankets. So it was nice. And they let us rest until Monday.

By the way, we got very good food there. Because we were workers, they had to give us food. And so we had a very good meal in the evening. It was always cooked potatoes with a peel on and a soup. That was a good meal. On Sundays, I think we had some meat too. But potatoes, standard every night.

And a lot of mustard soup, I never ate so much mustard soup in my life as they served over there. But apparently that was the food. And we were treated pretty good, so to speak. We worked seven hours every day.

Were you paid?

Paid? No. But they were very alarmed that they didn't send clothes with us. I mean the owner of the factory. We should get some kind of clothes. We didn't need anything because we stayed indoors. We went downstairs was the factory. And our dorm was in the third floor.

We had a washroom for ourselves, for the workers. And it had probably 20 washtubs in it with warm water and soap every day. So it was something human I think. Anyway, I thought that way.

But before you went to that bathroom, there was an SS woman standing at the door. And you had to stand up straight and say, may I go to the bathroom, please? That was already in the factory, you know.

But she was over us. And she had to know exactly where we are going and what we are doing. We had to answer to these SS women.

Were they German?

German, yes. And we had a new transport coming in, in November. Another 150 girls came in from Auschwitz. Apparently, we were good workers. And they asked for another 150 girls. So by the time in November, we were already 400 girls over there. They put up more beds. And kitchen grew and so on.

The kitchen was in the back yard. And they brought up the food every day. I started an interesting thing over there. A lot of girls got sick, and they couldn't digest the food. They could eat only toast.

And as I started this potato baking, since I was working with the ovens, I had two ovens to work with. One was to stamp this little glasses. And the other one is to dry certain things. And under this trace where I was drying, it was an electric stove. I would shove in the potatoes what the girls stole at the kitchen. And I will bake it for them.

For every five potatoes, I got one potato free for myself. That was my business. And that potato, I would take it into the sick room for those people who couldn't eat the food. And I will toast their bread on those ovens where I was drying those glasses. So they soon knew me as Potato Sandra. Everybody called me, would you please do this for me.

My friend told me, you are crazy. They are going to find you. They send you back to Auschwitz because they kept on threatening us if you talk to the workers in the factory. See, we were working there, but they were foremen from the city, German foremen.

And we were not allowed to talk to them, anything. We were silent workers. And if we talked to anyone in the factory, the SS woman was right there, and she will punish us for it. At one time--

What kind of punishment?

She sent us to bed one day without food because we were talking-- and somebody was talking in the factory. And next day, we acted very weak. And we decided we're not going to give out work if they don't feed us.

And so the director of the factory told the SS woman you cannot punish these women with food. You must feed them. They are not giving out work. So she didn't do that anymore.

But it happened that food was delayed for us. And at one time, she punished the girl by cutting her hair. And that was a terrible thing because our hair was just starting to grow in, and we just began to look like human beings. And she punished that girl by cutting her hair. And we were all watching it. And it was a very traumatic experience for us to see her being punished like that.

We'll take a break right now, Sandra. And we'll continue your story when we come back.

OK.