

We are at Television Studio WEWS in Cleveland, the 8th of August, 1984. Another of the interviews with Holocaust survivors living in the Cleveland area. I'm Sid Elsner.

This is Sally Pitluk, who comes from Poland. The town is Plonsk, P-L-O-N-S-K, 70 kilometers north of Warsaw. Sally will relate her experiences in the Plonsk ghetto, Auschwitz, and elsewhere.

But first, Sally, tell us about Plonsk itself. You had told me that it was the hometown of David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel.

Yes.

Describe Plonsk and tell us about Ben-Gurion's relationship to it.

I would say that perhaps Ben-Gurion put Plonsk on the map. It was a small town. There were about 10,000 people in town. I would say they were about 60% Jews in the town.

It was before the war. We had sort of a nice life. I come from a background of, I would say, lower middle class. My parents had a small dry goods store. It was very difficult to make a living.

But we didn't know any better. We had a very cultural life. Every Jewish parent strived to give their children the best education they could possibly afford. I, myself, went to school for about eight years.

The Jewish people didn't go together with the Polish people to school. We went in the afternoon. The Polish people went in the morning.

We were always felt that we are Jews, that the children, the Polish children, always used to call us dirty Jew. They would say Jew, you belong in Palestine, which is Israel now.

What year was this?

This was, as far as I could remember, perhaps it was in the late '20s, as far as I can remember. I had two brothers. One of my brothers was born in 1928, and the other one in 1933. My brother went to a Hebrew school. I went to a secular school, as I mentioned before.

Now how big was Plonsk, the population generally and the Jewish population?

As I said, the population perhaps were about 10,000 people. But I would say that 60% of the people were Jewish people. They were mostly tradesmen and small businessmen. There were perhaps maybe 10% were other, more affluent. But most of them were just making a meager living.

What drove Ben-Gurion back there? At what period would he come?

Well, Ben-Gurion, actually, he was born in the late 1800s. I believe that he was born in 1886. He left Poland when he was a young man. So I really don't remember. This was before I was born.

But when I remember, when I was growing up, when I was a teenager, we had quite a few Zionist organizations. He would come back, and he was naturally our hero, because he was already well-known. He was one of the first people settling in Israel. He left for Israel when he was a young man.

Occasionally, he would come back because he still had some relatives left in our hometown. He would come. To us, it was a great holiday when he came.

I know that the Jews came to Poland, probably, in the 12th or 13th century. Because there was a Polish King who

needed to trade and needed more civilization. He invited the Jews from the Western part of Europe. I presume most of them came, perhaps, from Germany. They brought the Yiddish language with them.

This much I can only tell you from history. This was long before my time. But I know that for generations, many generations, the Jews always lived in Poland. We were sort of contented with our lot because we didn't know any better.

Now we'll take a big leap forward and bring you up to today. Tell us about your own family, and your work in Cleveland, and what your home life is like, what your husband did.

Well, my home life right now is, first of all, I'm not a young woman anymore. I have four children.

I have two sons. My sons are twins. One is a physician. The other one is an optometrist.

My youngest daughter is a lawyer. She's married to a physician. My oldest daughter is a teacher. She's married to an engineer. I have six grandchildren. I unfortunately lost my husband three years ago.

What can I tell you? I think the United States is a magnificent country. Only in America, it could happen that I should have two doctor sons.

[LAUGHTER]

And a daughter, a lawyer, that's only in America.

OK. Well, go back to Plonsk from Cleveland. What was your town like, its general appearance, its industry? Did it have telephones? Did it have electricity?

No,

Was it big enough for streetcars?

No. I told you that this was rather a backward little shtetl. As far as I know, we had electricity. Perhaps there were a few telephones in the more affluent homes.

We didn't have one. We didn't have any plumbing in our house. We had outhouses. We didn't have any running water. It wasn't an easy life.

But the only thing that I could recollect that it was a very cultural life. I know that from my youngest years on, I always loved to read. Whenever I could get hold of a book, I love to read it.

And it was emphasized. It was emphasized in every Jewish home. The Jewish education, I presume it goes back to centuries that the Jewish parent always wanted to have as best an education for the children as possible.

Of course, I didn't have the opportunity because it was very, very expensive. We had one high school in town which was impossible to go to because it was very expensive and we were not affluent enough that I should go to it.

How did your family make a living?

As I said before, my family, we had a small dry goods store. It was a rather meager living. We had two market days.

We had all the villages, the small villages around. There were the Polish people that were living in the rural area. They were bringing, in the market days, their produce to town. We would buy from them the goods that they brought, and they would buy from the Jews the goods that we had to offer.

In the late '30s, we felt an awful lot of anti-Semitism because the government absolutely they just told them that they

should not buy from Jews. The Polish people were always rather anti-Semitic. My earliest recollection was that Jew go to Palestine.

That's all I can say about Poland. But at the same time, we just lived with it. We didn't know any better.

What was the main language spoken in your home?

In my home, we spoke Yiddish. But our language was Polish, because I was born and raised in Poland. I went to school in Poland. My second language in school I took was German. But at home, we spoke only Yiddish.

Well, how do you remember yourself in those days, Sally? That is, what did you look like?

I remember myself as just another teenager. We didn't realize that we were teenagers. There was never the emphasis on age and being a teenager or something. We didn't have really big aspirations, because it was a small town.

Did you have any non-Jewish friends?

No, no, I didn't have any non-Jewish friends.

What do you remember about anti-Semitism from those days?

Well, I'm telling you, this was the only thing that we were not-- we had no assimilation in our town, because the Polish people wouldn't let us assimilate. We were always sticking with our own people. Like, in the United States, when the children go to school, there is not a secular school. The Gentile children, the American children, and the Jewish children go together.

We didn't have this. The Jewish children had to go together. We did not go with the Gentile kids together. So consequently, we didn't have Gentile friends. Perhaps in very rare occasions, but I certainly didn't have any Gentile friends, any Polish friends.

When were you first aware of the war?

All right. On September 1, 1939, the war broke out. I remember it was a foolish yet. Because the Polish government, they told us right away.

In one street, there were loudspeakers. They were telling us that we should make masks, that there is going to be a lot of a gas war. So I remember that everybody was selling masks and putting it on, in case the planes come and they drop some deadly gas.

I remember that we were sewing up masks. All of a sudden, we saw planes. Everybody was saying these are our planes. These are Polish planes.

But already this was September. This was Friday. I remember it very clearly.

They were already German planes over our hometown. In the afternoon, we were bombed already. There was a lot of chaos, naturally. A lot of people started to run away.

We didn't know what to do. The Polish government was telling us that we should run toward the East. So a lot of people foolishly were running, and on the roads, they were bombed.

The war didn't, as far as I'm concerned, I know that Warsaw was under siege, perhaps for a month. But the September the 4th, we had the Germans. Already they entered our city.

There was bombing, but not too much of it. I don't think they had any resistance. They just occupied our city right away.

When they came in, we read so much about it. That's what the irony of it is. We read before the war what's going on in Germany. We knew about the Kristallnacht. We knew that Hitler is persecuting the Jews in Germany.

But somehow, we just couldn't believe it. I remember that my father used to tell me. And I said my God, what's going to happen to us.

My father used to say, look, child, you don't remember. You were not born before the First World War. But I remember when the Germans occupied Poland during the First World War. The Jews had a pretty nice life at that time.

So it's all propaganda. We ourselves believed. We didn't believe that all the atrocities that Hitler started in 1933 until '39 in Germany, that this could really come true. Then, again, we didn't have such a nice life in Poland. So we thought, well, perhaps it's not going to be that bad for us.

When the Germans entered our city, the first month, I presume, there was still the chaos. They were still fighting in certain parts of Poland. So we didn't feel anything yet. But little did we know that pretty soon they are going to start with the Jews. It soon started.

What were the changes in your family's life, then?

All right. Right away, about a month later, or perhaps six weeks up to two months later, they said that all the Jewish men have to gather at the Jewish cemetery. They came with trucks. They took away the elderly men. We never heard from them.

Then they started to go against the younger people. My parents at the time, we were afraid that, although my father had a very, very small business, we were afraid that perhaps they may take him away. We still didn't know that they were going to shoot them or they were going to hurt them. We all were afraid that they are going to take him away and God knows when he's going to come back. So my mom and my dad gathered, they made a few things, what we had there in our store, and they left for Warsaw.

And I and my two brothers were left at home. Little by little-- we didn't have the ghetto yet. We still had the Polish people used to come. And whatever I had, I used to sell just to be able to buy some food for myself and my brothers.

We were living in an apartment, which was like two rooms. One day, the Germans came in, a German Gestapo man. He said, tomorrow morning you have to move from here, this place. You can't live here anymore.

So here I was. I was 19 years old when the war broke out. I had to go and find a place for myself.

I want to regress for a moment. When the Germans came, after a while, they sort of made like a Jewish government. Like, we had to govern ourselves. Let's say that the Germans needed 200 people for work, young people. They would come to that Jewish Judenrat, they call this.

They would say you have to bring me 200. Let's say 100 women and 100 men. We need them to work for tomorrow.

So when I was told that I have to move, I went to the Judenrat and I said, what am I going to do. Here I have two small brothers.

I wasn't so sophisticated. I didn't know how to move. I didn't know where to move. So these people there told us that the Germans said that pretty soon they are going to have a ghetto in our town. So it would be the best, it would be advisable I should go to the place where the ghetto is going to be and see a place where I could go. This is for the future, because there's going to be a ghetto.

So sure enough, they took me to a certain place where Polish people lived. They lived in a very, very neglected little place. They moved out, and they moved into the apartment where I lived with my brothers, and I moved into this place

here. Because the Germans were preparing already that the Polish people that lived in this street where the ghetto was supposed to be, they would just move them out to the place where they outside the ghetto.

From my parents, I didn't hear for a while. Then I heard that in Warsaw it's getting very, very bad. And they're talking about also a ghetto.

We have to understand that where I lived, the town where I lived, Plonsk, was called the Reich. They sort of annexed it right away to Germany. Now Warsaw was called a protectorate, which it was just like there would be still a Polish government. But naturally, it was not a Polish government anymore. The Germans were there.

So there was a border between us and Warsaw. But my mom sort of smuggled through the border, and she came home. She was telling us already about the terrible atrocities and the hunger that was starting in Warsaw, and that they are also trying to erect a ghetto there. So my father was left in Warsaw.

During this time, they were constantly bringing the Jews out to a certain place, the square of the city. They would take lots of people away, and we never knew where they take them. Later on, we found out that they shot them.

I remember certain incidents, this was right in the beginning, this was still in '39, that they took the Jews that had beards. A lot of Jews were very religious and they had beards. They took them out to the marketplace.

They would stand there, and they would pull their hair out from their beards. They would beat them. They would tell them you raped German women and children.

It's so hard absolutely even to talk about it. Those poor Jews, they were hitting them so long. Until they said, you tell us that you raped German women. There weren't any German women in Poland.

When they were hurting them so terrible, they said all right. Yes, I did. That's when they would shoot them.

This was still the times where the ghetto was open. We didn't have a closed ghetto yet. Then the time came when all the Jews were ordered into the ghetto.

And in order to describe a ghetto, people in the United States talk about the ghetto where people live in one particular neighborhood, the Jews or the Blacks. Our ghetto was different. We had only one street. All the windows that went out to the street had to be barricaded and closed off.

We could only use the back of the yards. The yards were not too large, either. They took all the Jews, they brought us into the ghetto.

In the beginning, the ghetto wasn't closed yet. We could still go out occasionally from the ghetto. But in 1940, in the summer of 1940, they closed up the ghetto. That's where the tragedies began.

First of all, I forgot to tell you that as soon as the Germans came in, they made us wear yellow patches. It was a big patch in the front and a big patch in the back. We're not allowed to walk on the sidewalk.

If a Jewish man went by, naturally he was wearing those yellow patches. If a German went by, he had to take off his hat and bow. They tried to make us as nonpeople. How can I explain it? At first, they tried to take all the dignity away from us.

But it still didn't matter. Because we were so desperately clinging to hope. And in retrospect, I just see how stupid we were. Because every once in a while, we would get a German paper. It would say that here they occupied Belgium, and they occupied Holland, and they are occupying France. Every time we heard about an occupation, we thought that pretty soon the English are going to destroy them, that somehow, somewhere, they just cannot keep on going and winning all of Europe. But little did we know how strong they were.

Anyhow, in 1940, in the latter part of 1940, they closed the ghetto. When they closed the ghetto, that's when the terrible tragedies started to happen. We were assigned, like, cards. We would go, and they made a bakery in the ghetto, and we received a certain amount of bread per person, and also other, different goods.

It wasn't a starvation diet. We still could live with it. But later on, there's a particular incident that I would like to recall. I think that this was in 1941.

We called it the Bloody Sunday. About 100 people of the Gestapo came in to the ghetto. They said that all the Jews have to come out from their homes. We had a little meadow in the ghetto. Everybody has to segregate in this little meadow.

There were hundreds, maybe more. I don't recall. But there were a lot of Gestapo men.

They were standing in two rows. They had those huge rifles and those huge sticks. They made the Jews go through that as they were standing there and they were hitting everybody.

And particularly, there were quite a few women that were pregnant. So they took those pregnant women, and they were hitting them, and they were hitting them with their boots. The blood was running.

We were probably knee deep in blood. There were so many people killed at that time. This took, maybe, about three hours. And later on, when they left, there were so many dead. There were so many injured. This was one day.

Now I have to regress again. In our ghetto, when they closed the ghetto, I said before that there were 60% Jews in our hometown. But what they did is, all the little towns from around, the Jewish towns, they brought them into our ghetto.

So when we were in the ghetto, I would say that we were about 12,000 or perhaps 15,000 Jews. Because they all brought into our ghetto.

Now the living conditions were absolutely indescribable. They were in one room could live about 20 people. In retrospect, I really don't know how we didn't commit suicide.

But somehow, nobody even committed suicide. We had such hopes that perhaps some miracle is going to happen, that maybe they'll start losing the war and they won't put so much attention toward us.

Was there any underground in the ghetto, resistance?

In the ghetto, there was no underground. There was no resistance. Let me tell you why.

There are a lot of people that don't understand it. They think that we were not heroes, that we had no resistance. First of all, we didn't know that we are going to be all killed.

We didn't know that. Nobody would ever believe that. But we only knew that, let's say that once there was a resistance. There was somebody who hit an SS man. So they took his whole family and put them against the wall and shot them.

So how could there be resistance? It's so easy to stay in the United States and talk in retrospect and say, why didn't you resist. If you resisted, if one would kill a Gestapo man, they would take 100 Jews and kill them. That's why there was no resistance.

There was fear. They instilled in us such fear that we just didn't. We were just numb. We were just like sheep.

They took us out once. They said that there was typhoid. Typhoid was terrible in the ghetto from the dirt, from the congestion.

We didn't have sanitary anything. We didn't have soap. We didn't have anything, really, to clean ourselves. So all of a

sudden we had typhoid.

So the Germans said that we are dirty, and we have to eradicate the typhoid. So they made us all come out and they shaved the women's hair. They said that we are dirty, and we don't know how to take care of ourselves, and that's why it happened.

People were dying. We didn't have any medication. We had one doctor in the ghetto.

He died of typhoid, too. So we had nobody. We had nothing.

I had a cousin of my mom's that lived in a nearby little town. They brought him to our town. But before they brought him, they took them somewhere, the whole little town. They took them somewhere in barracks.

And they were hitting them so much that a lot of them never came back. But this cousin of my mom's, with his family and the wife and three children, he came back. He never walked again. He came back paralyzed because they were hitting him so much.

He was living in that ghetto. How can explain you that 16,000 Jews were living in one small street? There were big gates. You couldn't go out. You didn't know what was going out in the outside world.

We had our own police. We had the Jewish police. I remember one incident.

Those policemen were not happy to be policemen, but they could earn a meager living. They were paid as being policemen, so they were policemen in the ghetto.

One of them, who was a few years older than I, before the war he went to the university. He came home when the war broke out, from Warsaw. He came and he had no way of making a living. He had a mother and he had two sisters.

I remember when he came and he says, you know what? I became a policeman. Isn't that degrading?

It wasn't anything to be a hero, to be a policeman. It's just to be able to earn a few marks that he became the policeman. And as it happened, they caught a man who escaped from the ghetto. They brought him into the ghetto.

And they told this policeman that he has to take care of him that he shouldn't escape. Because they probably were going to shoot him. This policeman, evidently, he sort of didn't watch him that closely, and this man escaped again.

So I remember that one day we didn't even know what was happening. But a couple of days later, they erected gallows in that meadow, that famous meadow that they took us all the time out. They made all the Jews come out again. They brought this policeman. They did hang him.

From then on, hangings were every day. If they were caught, somebody out of the ghetto, because people were still running out and taking off their badge because there was hunger already-- their patches, rather, the yellow patches. If they caught them, they brought them into the ghetto and they would hang them, or there were shootings constantly going on.

Still, we were coping. Because we still lived with that silly hope that perhaps the war is going to be over. And especially in 1941, we heard that the Germans are invading Russia.

Well, by then, we were absolutely so delighted. Now we thought perhaps for sure, now the Russians and the English are fighting against them. We didn't know anything about the United States. And sure enough, later on, I found out that the United States was not in the war until '41.

We were delighted. We felt now this time, perhaps our liberation is going to come from the Russians. Little did we know that they were so strong that they went deep into Russia.

That was the summer of '41, June, July.

This was the summer. This was June and July. It was the summer of '41. We saw the Germans going to the front, through our place, going to the East, the Eastern Front.

We heard the cannons going off. It wasn't that far from us. We had lots of hope. It was false, false hope.

Most of all, in retrospect, when I remember, when I remember the devastating way what happened to our families, my brothers were so young. My brother was then-- my younger brother, who was born in 1928, he was, let's say, he was in 1940, 1940, how old would he be, he was 14 years old? He was 14 years old.

My little brother was born in 1933. So he was what? He was 10 years old.

In the winter of '41, they took my brother to work. My little brother didn't have any shoes. It was such a miserable, miserable wind. It was so cold.

We had no way of getting any shoes for them. We had no way of having any food for them. It was so devastating for my parents to see their children always hungry. And my father, who was a well-respected Jew before the war, would go out to work, out of the ghetto if he was lucky and sometimes he would bring home a little food because some Germans, if he worked real hard, they would give him an extra piece of bread.

Or I remember once he was working with some-- I don't know how to describe it. But we didn't have any coal. So we didn't have any fuel.

So they took my brother. And he was digging turf. It was called turf. We put it in a stove to burn it in the winter. He was coming home and logging that turf that we should be able to warm up by that little stuff.

They gave us potatoes. That's what the Germans gave us. They made huge holes in the ground, and they brought lots of potatoes. We had the potatoes, and perhaps that's how we survived. So constantly, we made all kinds of foods with the potatoes.

We brought this, it wasn't fuel, it was a turf that we put in the--

Peat?

Peat, right. They put it, and that's how we cooked with it.

Emotionally, was it worse for you in the ghetto personally than later on in the camps?

Emotionally, I think in the ghetto, I was completely devastated, when I had to look at the suffering of my parents and my brothers and my whole family. My father had three brothers in our hometown, and he had two sisters. All of them were married.

All of them had had children. All of us were hungry. All of us were degraded.

We were made to a nonpeople. We were made to hate each other, even. Because the one who was the policeman, perhaps that he had a little better living, he had no choice. He had to be strict with the other people.

Let's say that somebody wanted to go out from the ghetto. He would say, what do you care? I'm going to go out. If I'm going to be killed, it's none of your business.

But this policeman wouldn't let him go out. So he would be the mean one. They would say just because look, one Jew is against the other Jew. What the Germans accomplished is they made even the Jew hate the other Jew for certain things



that they were not responsible for it.

Like, let's say that they came to the Judenrat, and they said I want to have 500 people for work today. There were certain places where perhaps the work wasn't as hard as other places. So they had no way of knowing where one part of the people were going to work and the other.

Well, always they would say, oh, because this one has some sort of influence. But this is not true. They didn't have any influence. It was just that they tried to make amongst us that hatred. They succeeded with it, too.

When you hear about, in Warsaw, that they say that the children would say about their parents where they are hiding or something, this is not even true. But they just tried in every respect to degrade us. They took away our pride. They took away everything from us.

And the ghetto years, I would say the ghetto years, mentally, were to me the most horrendous years. And then started the story with the taking the Jews out to the gas chambers.

Well, before that, in the ghetto, to what extent did the non-Jews help the Nazis, if any? And also, did non-Jews help the Jews-- non-Nazis, the Polish people helped the Jews at all?

Yeah. As far as I'm concerned, when we went to the ghetto, I know that in certain parts of Poland there were some Polish people that perhaps helped the Jews. Because I know that there was an underground.

But not in my part of Poland. In our part of Poland, we didn't have any help. As a matter of fact, the Polish people, when the Germans came in, I think that they were delighted when we started to wear the yellow patch in the back and in the front and when we started to be persecuted.

Right away when they came in, there was a law that everything that if we have any furs, we had to give up. Any jewelry, we had to give up.

This was right away. This was right in 1940. We had to give up our worldly goods.

Then they came to the Judenrat. They would say that we need today, we need certain things for the Germans. And I presume that not all Jews would give up everything.

So they would take it and they would give it to the Germans. Otherwise, they would say otherwise you would have to give me 50 Jews or 100 Jews. We never knew what happened to them.

We didn't know that they were taking them away and they'll never come back. We still hoped against hope. How could it be possible that this German race, that the German civilization can do this to people?

Were you deported from the ghetto to a concentration camp?

Yes, in 1942. I would say it started in July that they started to deport people from the ghetto. Now they divided us. They didn't have that many trains, I presume. I mean, how could they take, like, 16,000 people at one time?

So they took 2,000 at one time. And it would be, like, every two weeks, there would be a transport. They also came to that Judenrat, to the Jewish government. They would tell them that we want 2,000 Jews.

We are going to send them to different camps. They're going to live in different camps, but we are going to clean out this ghetto of Jews. So they came.

First, they took the old people. So let's say if they gathered enough older people, they had, like, 2,000 people. So they told them to take everything that they could put on on their back and take their belongings, their meager belongings.

They would just march them out to the train. When the trains came, they were cattle trains. They would put them in like cattle in those trains.

They would take them away. We never heard from them. Two weeks later, they would take another transport, another 2,000 Jews. Then they would take already people with little children. I don't know.

And, again after two weeks, they would come again. They would take, again, let's say, middle-aged people, middle-aged people. Middle-aged people would be people that they would be in their thirties in those years. They took, again, 2,000 people out.

Finally, they said that there are no more Jewish children in the ghetto. I remember this so clearly. That one day, just at random, some Gestapo people came in.

Some mothers were hiding their children. Some went together with their children, but some were very young people and they had their children yet. They weren't selected yet to go.

But the Nazis assumed that there are no more children in the ghetto. They came in. And that lady was holding a child, maybe the child was eight months old.

That Gestapo man took the child from her arms. I saw this with my own eyes. Just he took his gun and he shot the child. He said you dirty Jew. Didn't you know that there are no more Jewish children in the ghetto?

Anyhow, so it depends. I don't remember clearly if it was every two weeks. Perhaps every three weeks when they had those cattle trains ready they came in.

The night before, they told the people, the Jewish governments they're called, that we need, again, 2,000. They kept on taking the 2,000. They were leaving.

And all we knew is they're resettling us, that they are taking us somewhere. Because they want to. They want to resettle us.

What happened to your family?

Now my family still was still there. Luckily, I felt that we were absolutely very lucky that my parents were still not touched. Although my parents, my father was 44 years old, I think, at the time. My mother was 42. But my parents were still not touched.

But as I said, my father, his family, his brothers, his sisters were taken with the earlier transports. My family was still there. Then there were, again, transports every few weeks. My parents were still there. We felt very, very lucky.

Then one day, there were already almost all Jews were gone. There were left, maybe, 5,000 Jews in the ghetto. Still, my parents were there.

And being that we were so congested, we were living in those terrible, terrible conditions, so I went to my cousin to sleep there because it was already 10 o'clock at night and we knew that the transport that had to go the next morning out was already gone. Little did we know that they were still on the station.

My mother told me, oh, go ahead. You'll have a better night's rest. Go over there. You'll sleep at your cousin's.

I went over to my cousin. And about 5 o'clock in the morning, all of a sudden a lot of Gestapo came into the ghetto. They said that nobody should go out. They're going to shoot.

We didn't know what happened. We couldn't get out of whatever we were, we couldn't get out. It turned out that they had one empty boxcar, cattle car, and they needed 200 more people. They just went at random to houses and they

dragged them out.

Amongst them, were my parents and my brothers. When it was all clear, about 10 o'clock in the morning, I went to my brother's. My parents were not there anymore.

I couldn't wait, to tell you the truth. I couldn't wait for myself to go already, too. I just wanted to go already. I just didn't want to. I mean, I felt that I'm going to be reunited with my parents, with my brothers.

Well, anyhow, the time arrived. This was in October that our last transport was taken. By then, there were actually mostly young people left.

In 1942?

Yeah, this was 1942 October that it was completely cleaned out and we left. To explain you what was happening in the train, how we were in those trains, in those cattle trains.

How long a journey?

The journey took probably five or six days.

And then we arrived in Auschwitz.

You went from north of Warsaw--

To the south of Poland, the south of Poland. Not too far--

Near Krakow.

--not too far from Kraków. And we arrived in Auschwitz. It was already sort of, like, twilight. Perhaps there was, in our transport, about 2,500 people.

As we came down, this is so difficult to recall, because as we came down there were hundreds, probably, of Gestapo people hitting and hollering. And there were trucks. And they were hollering, the men were separated right away from the women.

And there was--

Confusion.

I don't know. There was so much confusion.

We didn't know they were taking us. They were taking some people on one side and the others on the other side. Men in one side. The men you didn't see anymore. They took the men in a completely different part.

They took in out of, perhaps, 2,500 people, they took 1,000 into the camp. The rest went on the trucks. And I remember so distinctly. So they put me with the people to go on the trucks.

There was a lady who said I don't know. Is it better to go on the trucks or is it better to be with the people that are not going on the trucks? She said I looked young.

She said, oh, you look so young. Why should you go on the truck? Go try to be with the people that they're counting, the people to walk. As I was going in with those people, an SS man came by.

He says you don't belong here. They counted us in five. He says you don't belong here. Get out of here. Go back to the

people that are going on the truck.

And then they did help me, again. Go in there. Maybe you can go in there. Maybe it's better to be there. I went back in there. The SS man came, another one came.

And he pushed me into the people that were walking. Then the other people they put on the truck, and the 500 women. We walked to the camp. This was a walk to the camp. We came to the camp when it was, perhaps, about 5 or 6 o'clock in the evening.

If you'd gone on the trucks, what would have happened?

We went straight to the gas chambers.

OK.

It's OK.