

I'm Stan Garfinkel. Today, we are interviewing Celia Rosenfeld, a Holocaust survivor. The project is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland section. Mrs. Rosenfeld, where were you born?

Well, I was born in Hungary. And when I was three years old, my parents moved back to Poland because they are originally from Poland. And what I remember-- not too much from, since I'm three years old. I was raised in Poland and in the same city then my mother was born. This was Chrzanów. And I was in school there. And I lived with my family. We were five children-- three brothers, me, and my sister.

Tell me where you said the town was, Chrzanów?

Chrzanów, not far away from Kraków.

I see. What did your father do?

My father was a tailor.

And was this a large town or a village?

No, no, no, was a nice outfit. It was not too big, but it was a nice-size city.

Did you have a-- did you live in a house or an apartment?

In an apartment.

And how many of you were there in the family?

Five-- seven with my parents-- five children, and my father, and mother.

You went to school. Did you go to a state school, a Polish school?

Yeah, a public school for seven years. And then I went to Hebrew school.

In your home, what language was spoken?

In the house-- my parents were very Orthodox. In the house, we only spoke Yiddish. But with my friends, naturally, Polish.

So you were completely bilingual?

Right.

You said that your parents were very Orthodox.

Very Orthodox.

Did you celebrate Jewish life in your home? Was it a very religious house?

Very religious. My father was-- has a long beard. My mother was wearing a wig. And we celebrate. Every morning, we have to get up and do our prayers. My father went twice a day to the temple. My brothers-- we did everything it was possible to please our parents. They were not as Orthodox then, were a little bit more modern. But every holiday was celebrated in a very Orthodox home.

Tell me about the preparations for Sabbath.

Sabbath, my mother used to get up 4 o'clock in the morning and prepare everything. We light seven candles on the table. We have our all meal, Sabbath meal, Friday night. After this, we make all our prayers and sing all the Hebrew and Jewish songs.

And we didn't turn on a light. When the Sabbath candles were out, we have to go to bed because there was no turning lights on. Saturday morning, my parents went to the temple. When we were smaller, we went with them. But then they had to go by themselves.

Why is that?

Because my brothers and sisters, they were going out with their friends. And they only picking up our parents from the temple. And then Saturday, after the temple, we have another meal at home. Was a cold meal because we are not supposed to warm up anything. And then Friday night, we finished our Sabbath again with candles and with a nice song to finish up our Saturday night.

At school, were there many other Jewish children?

Oh, yeah, a lot of Jewish. There was half and half, half Christian and half Jewish.

And the young Jewish children-- were there many Orthodox boys, for example, who wore payos?

Oh, my gosh. Our city was loaded with them, very, very Orthodox. One of my brothers has payos on when he was younger. Then he was still-- we were Orthodox because we were raised in the house Orthodox, but not as my father was and my mother. They had to get up in the morning, and put on their tefillin, and pray. But they were not this Orthodox that my parents.

Were your parents Hasidic?

Just Orthodox, not Hasidic.

Not Hasidic.

No.

How did you get along with the children in the town who were not Jewish?

Very well. Sometime, they hurt me because I was Jewish. There was always a little hatred. But as friends, I have good friends from school. After school, we used to play all kind of games. And then when I was out of school, I didn't communicate with them because I have my own friends, Jewish friends.

I belong to an organization, a Zionist organization. My brother was there. He organized this organization. So naturally, I have my own friends. We have all kind of meetings. We always got together. We have a library. We read books. We have very nice friends. So I didn't have anything in common with them anymore, only when I was in school-- out of school, nothing.

Did you have non-Jewish neighbors?

Oh, sure, lots around. Yeah.

Were you on-- was your family on good terms with them?

Always on good terms. We got very well with our neighbors. When I was-- I remember, I was a school girl. And my mother always told me, if you get up in the morning and you see anybody of your neighbors, you just greet them very

nice with a good morning and how are you, by the name, you call them. We were very-- our neighbors were fine to us. We didn't have any problems. I don't think they liked us so much. But they didn't show it. We didn't have any problem.

So the only way you can say they didn't like you is?

Because I was Jewish.

But you felt that or they expressed it?

They expressed it.

How?

Well, when the holidays, they always start-- if we have Sukkot, we have to put a sukkah on, they said, well, it's going to rain because the Jewish holidays are coming. They always give us a little sign this. But we were so used to it, it didn't bother us as much because we know, we Jewish, and they are not. But we didn't have any problems with our neighbors.

And you traded in stores that were both Jewish and non-Jewish?

Well, most in the neighborhood where I lived was mostly Jewish stores, grocery stores or clothing. Or we always went to our friends because, don't forget, my mother was born and raised in this town. She knew everybody. And everybody knew her. So when we went to buy shoes or clothing, we always went to people my mother knew.

So we have-- and most the stores, they were Jewish, to tell you the honest truth. Every businessman was a Jew. There was very few non-Jewish that have business. There were most working people, the non-Jewish people. But the Jewish, they're always in business. And that was-- so we went to them.

Did you notice any difference in the attitude of the government toward Jews in the late '30s?

Mr. Garfinkel, I was too young to--

To remember that.

I was only 16 when the war came out. So I-- from politics, I have no idea.

OK. Well, what do you remember, then, about the war, the coming of the war?

Well, there were start talking. And I wasn't a child anymore. And Hitler, and it's going to be very bad. But we hope not. Then all of a sudden, they came. And there was really very, very bad because they came into our city just before the High Holidays, Rosh Hashanah. And my father was very Orthodox. And they started burning all the temples. There was no temple where to go and pray.

The Germans did this?

The Jewish committee asked them, they begged them, to keep a few temples, they shouldn't burn them all. Make some workshops, do anything. So they left a few. But when the holidays comes-- and this was Yom Kippur. And my father was very, very Orthodox. So he was praying in a private home.

And we children should keep an eye. When the Germans are close, we should come in and stop them. We kept an eye, but it was too late. They came in and took all the men.

In Yom Kippur, the men wear over their clothes the white robes, and the tallis, and the yarmulkes. And they put them on a truck. And they drove them around the whole city in Yom Kippur. Then they took them to jail. And they beat them so bad. This my father didn't survive. He died from beating.

And this was very early on in the war.

This was the beginning, 1939. Was in October.

What then happened to you and your family?

Then my mother-- and we have to move out from our home right away. And they put us in around a little-- like a ghetto, but not exactly a ghetto. We had a small, little room. There was my brother, who was engaged with his fiancée-- my sister was married, she lived in a different city-- and my other two brothers, and me, and my mother, because my father was dead already. And then there was a sign out-- from 18 till about-- they have all come to work, to register for work. So my mother was afraid they're going to send them away. So she begged them to leave and to go to Russia.

That is your brothers?

So my brother, my oldest brother with his wife, they got married before they leave because my mother didn't let him go as not married. So we put a chuppah on. And they left. And my older brother left. And me, and my younger brother, and my mother, we stayed.

Did they successfully reach Russia?

They reach Russia. We got-- the beginning, we got a few letters. But they did not survive. And I was left with my mother and my brother. So we-- the Germans start making in our city from the temples a workshop to make the Germans uniforms. And I was very talented because I have the talent from my father. I knew how to sew.

So I went to this shop. And I gave them a sewing machine. They said, if I'm going to work in this shop, I could save my mother and brother. So I work shifts there. And all the tailors, they teaching me how to, and I made uniforms. So I worked for them for close a year. And one night, I went for night shift. When I came home, I didn't have my brother and my mother anymore. They send them to Auschwitz.

This was-- can you remember about when it was?

1940.

That soon?

Yeah. Right, yeah, a year later.

Tell me, before we pursue that, you worked at the factory. And were you paid? How did you, and your mother, and brother survive?

We were selling anything we had. We had some jewelry they didn't know we were hiding. And we went to the Christian people. They gave them jewelry and linens. And you know what in a house-- my mother had most wonderful things. And they gave us potatoes and a little bit bread. And we have coupons for bread, so much a week. And it was very hard. But my mother, somehow, she managed with selling all the goods we had in the house.

During that period, while you were working, and your mother and brother were still there, did any of your neighbors help you?

You mean the non-Jewish?

Yes.

No, they didn't even come to see us, none would. But my mother used to go to them and give them all kind of goodies to

survive, to have a potato, or a little bit flour to make something. For that, they gave us. But for nothing, they didn't care if we starve to death.

When you got back to your home one day and found your mother and brother gone, had you any idea that was going to happen?

No. Because they promised me, if I'm going to work for them, I can keep my mother and brother. That's-- I'm supporting them. And they came in middle of the night. This was on a-- I remember like today. I went, this was Friday night. I have to go to work.

And my mother said, if God is going to help us, we're going to survive, I'm going to do so many goods that God should forgive me that you have to work on Saturday. This was her biggest problem. And that's all. I saw her the last time.

How did you know that they were taken to Auschwitz?

I did not. My brother, he was 14 years old, six feet tall, like a man. He could survive. But he didn't let my mother go alone because they told him that he's going to work. They're going to a work camp. So they put him away. And he ran back to my mother. And he said-- he wrote me a letter. This was in the public school. They took all the people together.

And through a Jewish policeman, he gave the Jewish policeman a letter, he should give it to me. And this letter was written from him. He said, don't worry, I'm going with my mother to a camp. And I'm going to work and support my mother. I could be free, go to a different camp. But somehow, I managed to be with my mother together.

And then I found out-- I have witnesses, they both went to the gas chamber. Because they always put you right and left. So they knew which part has to go to the gas chamber and which part has to go to a working camp. If my brother would be on the other side, he would go to a work camp. And he would probably survive. But he didn't let my mother go alone.

What, then, did you do?

Then I was lost. I didn't have nothing. I was out. They locked up my house. And anything I have on my body, that's it. That was mine. So I went to a girlfriend, who her mother, they didn't took her mother. So I lived with them. No. Was a German family. They used to be my neighbors. So they took me in.

And one day, they came, middle of the night, and took the whole family too. There was a hospital there. They put all the people together. And I was with them. And I'm supposed to go to Auschwitz. From all the people, they let me go. They said, you don't belong here. Go away. Then I was again without nothing.

Now, you mentioned a German family. That is a Jewish family from Germany?

A Jewish family. And they were-- and they took the whole family away because they're supposed to be some prisoners, some political prisoners. That's what they claimed there. So when I was with them, living with them, they took me too. But I have a little passport. And the name wasn't the same. And when the Germans saw this, I'm not, I don't belong with them, they let me go. They say, you don't belong here. You go home.

I didn't have a home. So I went to my girlfriend. This girlfriend is still alive. She lives in Israel. But her mother didn't survive. And I lived with them till there was the time when all Jews have to leave the city. There was judenrein, that means free of Jews. So her mother went on this side. And I went with her on this side. And they took us to a camp, a work camp, me and my girlfriend.

In that time that you were with your girlfriend and her mother, had your girlfriend's father been taken away already?

Yeah. No, he was in Russia with his three sons.

He was able to-- they escaped.

They escaped.

And were you continuing to work at the factory?

Yeah, because all of us work. Her mother and my girlfriend worked there too. So three of us, we went every day to work.

Was it a regular factory building?

Well, there were all the sewing machines, all the equipment. There were lots of men. There were good tailors. If we didn't know something, they were the four men, and they give us the work. And came out as-- I became a good tailor.

What-- were these tailors all Jews?

All Jews.

Everybody in the factory?

Everybody was not-- none of them was non-Jewish, they're all Jews.

How did you-- you said that you had bread rations. How did you eat during this period when you were with your girlfriend and her mother? What sort of things?

We have bread. Once a week, we have coupons to go and buy the bread. Then, later on, they start paying us a very small amount money, just to survive for the bread. So we bought the bread. And the rest, we just struggled. Most of the time, we ate bread and water. And we could able to make a little soup from something, we made it.

Tell me, what did you think during this time? What were your ideas about what happened or what was going to happen?

We were-- I thought, it's going to be over very soon, another month and another month. The willpower to live was so big. We want to survive. We knew this-- we were too young, maybe, to think that something like that's ever going to happen. I was so happy that someday, my brothers are in Russia, they're going to come home, my mother, and my other brother.

I have a married sister who was with her husband and child. Didn't even come to my mind all dead. I thought, after the war, and soon, it's going to be over, we're going to be united again. And we're going to have the whole family together.

The idea that the Germans were attempting to exterminate the Jews, that didn't--

We didn't know that. I did not know that. I had no idea they're going to be killed. I thought, they're going to be sent away to some other parts of camps. And we're going to get united after the war is over. And we always said, oh, another month and another month. The most, three months, the war is going to be over. But then we start dragging, and dragging, and dragging. And then when the whole city went away, we--

What happened then?

I went with the same girlfriend I lived together. We went to-- they sent us away to a camp.

How did you find out about that?

How did it occur?

They took us to a train. And we travel all night. And we came to a camp. And there were, my, so many people-- men

and women. And they took us to-- when I came to this camp, I was just sick about the beating of the people there, and how the people lived, and how they worked.

I was sick. I never saw this in my whole life. So they ask, who is a seamsters? We need some people who know how to sew. So I went out. I'm a seamstress. I'm a tailor. I know everything about sewing. And I took my girlfriend with me too.

Did she know about sewing?

Yeah, she was working. She knew about handwork. I knew how to sew. I said, don't worry, we both together. So they sent us back right away from this camp to another camp. And there was a workshop.

We have to patch up the clothing for the men's camp. There were a men camp and a ladies' camp. And they were wearing clothes. So we have to patch them up. And there was a little workshop. And I was there and patching up all the stuff for the men. That was very easy. But I was a short time there. They send me away again to another camp.

Let's pause for a minute and see whether we can, first of all, establish a couple of names. What was the first-- do you remember the name of the first camp that you went to?

Yeah.

What was that?

This was Magstadt.

And that was still in Poland?

No, this was in Germany.

This was in Germany.

This was not far away from Breslau. This was in Germany. I didn't have any camp-- I was not in one camp in Poland. They were all in Germany.

And how did you-- they put you on a train? Or you were with--

Yeah, they were on a train.

And then the next camp, where you became a seamstress, what was that?

Klettendorf.

Klettendorf. And do you have any idea of when this was?

I came to Magstadt 1941. I was only a few days there. Was an awful camp.

What do you mean when you say awful?

When we came to this camp, the whole city was free already. They took all the Jews away. So we have a Jewish police. Jewish men, they were policemen-- not for the German, but for the Jews, to keep everything on order. When there was a selection to take people away to the camp, the Jewish police has to go, and select the people, and take them to the Germans. Not as they want to do it, but they have to do it.

So when we came to this camp, and they came-- they have uniforms on. And when the kapo-- that means he was in

charge of the whole camp. He was a Jew too. He was very bad. He beat the police so terrible, this blood just pouring out. And when I saw that-- he was a terrible man. He was beating the men to death. And when we saw this, we were so lucky just to leave this camp. After a few days, they transferred us to Klettendorf.

Why do you think they did? Or was there any reason?

He was-- he lived in a little town not far away from my city. And there was-- when they have select people to go to a camp, the Jewish police from our city went there. And he took away a brother of his. He was so angry with this Jewish police that he took advantage. And he said, I'm going to show you what you did to my brother. You send him away. And he start beating them to death. I did not see one man who survived from this police, not one. First of all, he came with a whip.

And this was a Jew?

He was a kapo when my husband was in camp, later on.

So you then left and went to--

I went to Klettendorf. They sent us away, 12 girls. And we came there. And we worked in this camp. There was a little workshop. And I worked there. I was there maybe six months. Then they need girls to come to a factory where we make fabric-- parachute fabrics, mattress fabrics for the hospitals. There was a factory, and they need people.

So they select us. And we came to this camp. But the camp was not built. There was nothing. There was one room, nowhere where to sleep, no water, no kitchen. We have to start building our own home.

And this was February or March-- very cold, snow, no clothes on. By the time they built this place, we were ready to go to work. We have to walk.

What did you do in the meantime?

Nothing. There was a building torn down. So they have little pieces of wood. So we stood on the line like this, and taking one piece of wood, give it to the other person, to the-- back and forth for eight hours a day, standing outside, and working with a piece of wood, not to just relax and do nothing, just to do that all day long.

I mean, it wasn't constructive, you were just--

No, it just was like a torn building till the factory was ready for us.

And where did you sleep?

In one room on the floor.

And food?

They built up a little tent. And they make us a little bit spinach soup.

Did any of the people that you were with get sick?

We didn't get sick then. But the minute we get sick, we have to-- they took us away. We couldn't be sick. If you sick, you are not able to work. And if you are not able to work, you cannot survive. Then they opened this factory. And we have to walk six miles a day-- 12 miles a day, six miles one way and six miles back to the camp.

When did your day start?



4 o'clock in the morning was the Appell. We were all out. And then we marched. There was the army-- the army, not the SS. But later on, they transferred us to a big camp with SS, the women. They was even worse.

Tell me, when you say it was the army, the army ran the camp and the factory?

No. They were just in charge of us, to walk with us to work and keep a eye in the factory.

And did they-- were they brutal?

The army wasn't as bad. But the SS, the women were very bad. We have to march like soldiers.

Let's go back to this factory. So was this a very large factory?

Very large.

And all the workers in it were women?

Women and men-- very few men because most of the men, they were in the army.

And who were these people? They weren't all Jews. Or were they?

Germans. We have only one section Jews. The rest are all German women and men.

And did you have any communication with them?

No. We couldn't even look at them. We were separated from them. And they told us, if you ever going to open your mouth and talk to anybody of this women, you are out. And you know where you're going to go. So we couldn't even look at them, nothing.

We came to work. I was working on three machines. First of all, they have to teach us how to work with the machine. It was very hard. So we have men, older men, to show us how to work.

Were they businesslike or mean?

Some of them were mean. But when they were teaching us how to work the machine, they were very fine. They were gentle to us. Because they want us to learn fast.

Did they speak in German?

Only German.

And you spoke German at that point?

Well, I spoke Yiddish. So it wasn't too hard for me to understand them. And sometime, when I couldn't understand, well, we figure out somehow what the meaning means. And by the time we learned, we were young. And we pick up the German very fast.

And what sort of-- you mentioned earlier, you were making parachutes?

Fabric.

Fabric.

This was a special factory just to make fabrics.

Where was it?

This was in Reichenbach.

And then you were moved again.

We moved. We worked in Reichenbach. But we moved to a new camp.

Which was what?

In Langenbielau. This was our last camp where we were liberated.

And tell me about that camp.

This camp was a very large camp. We were 32 or 33 girls in one room. We have bunk beds, three stories. And we have all kind of sections, different. When we got up at 4 o'clock in the morning, we were 1,200 girls in the camp.

Each part was in a different camp to go to work. One was the-- we were in the Weberei, that means we made the fabric. Other part of girls, they made the thread from cotton that we can make the fabrics. One was all kind of-- everybody in the same factory.

But there were so many parts that work. So we walked to work about 10,000 girls, different directions. And we have to walk-- not walk, we have to march-- eins zwei, drei, that means one, two, three, with the SS, the German women. And they were very cruel.

In what way?

If we wouldn't-- if we didn't walk fast enough and they missed the movie, they punished us for it-- no food, what we get only one spoon of soup and one slice of bread for the day. We have to kneel on little rocks, stones, and keep two rocks for one hour like that for punishment we didn't work-- we didn't walk fast enough.

Once again, were all of the women in the camp Jewish?

Yeah, all of them.

And they came from all parts of Europe or just Poland?

No, no, from everywhere-- from Hungary, from-- most in our came, they were Hungarian and Polish. I mean, from my group I knew. But they were from all over. They were from all over.

By this time, which is what, 1943, '44, did you have an idea of what was going on?

Still, we didn't know. We have no idea.

What did you think about or did you discuss the situation with your friends?

Well, we always-- our-- in our mind was-- we were always hungry. We were so hungry that our mind was only if we going to survive, we going to have our family. The only things we praying-- to have a loaf of bread with a knife, we just can cut into a piece of bread and eat as much we want. This was our dream-- food.

For six years, if a person is always hungry, rain, snow, we have no underwear to wear, no shoes, no-- just a little robe we were wearing with the striped thing, freezing to death, walking to work. The factory was not heated. When I turn on the machine with a little handle, there was heated with steam. My hand was frozen into the handle, was so cold.

We were only allowed to go to the bathroom four times a day. And we have to register. By the door was sitting a SS woman. We have to stand up and say, may I go, please? And we have tickets. Put the ticket to go straight out and go to the bathroom. And she watched the time how long I take there back to work.

We didn't eat all day, just in the evening a little water soup and one slice of bread. Our dream was just to have enough food to eat-- and still believe that we're going to get united with our families. They still are not dead. They're alive. They're waiting for us. And when we were liberated, then we find out what happened.

Tell me about that--

Liberation?

--about the liberation.

We worked in this factory. And we-- one day-- there was in between. We couldn't go to work because they bombard the city when we worked. We have to stay and work in the camp, making holes, in case when they come to our camp, we should hide there. And we did all kind of dirty thing.

And then one day, we heard this, something is going on. The shooting was so terrible, we couldn't sleep nights. And one morning, we get up, there is no women anymore. The SS moved out.

And a German soldier was there. And he said, you are not going to work. You got to wait because the city is not clear. We are not safe to go out. You stay in the camp. Don't move. So we stayed there-- no food, no water. We sitting there. And all of a sudden, we saw, the door is open to the camp.

A gate, you mean?

The gate. We were surround with electric wires. But the gate is open. So we walked out. We said, what happened has happened. We cannot be here. How long can we survive with nothing? We walked out. And we walked around. And the people in this little town, they invite us to come to their house. They're going to give us food. But we were afraid.

And then all of a sudden, I saw a motorcycle with a soldier in it, but such a funny soldier. I said to my girlfriend, who is that? He's not a German. And then a truck came with soldiers, with rifles to us like that. And they start talking to us. But we didn't understand the language.

So one of the captains stood up. And he said, are you Jewish children? In Yiddish. And we said, yes. He said, don't worry, we are Russian soldiers. We came to liberate you. You are free. The war is over.

So don't ask. We were in heaven. He came to the camp. They cut the wires. They look for ammunition, if they are not someplace. And they said, you are free. We're going to try to do the best. That's the girls they took right away to the hospital.

And he said, we're going to give us some food. But we're going to try to give you transportation to go home. But they didn't. We have to do our own transportation. We took our train and took us to go home.

Tell me about what you thought then and how you dealt with the Russians, what they were like.

They were not so pleasant. First of all, we were afraid to stay alone in the camp because they came and they want to rape us. They said, we liberate you, and you got to do something for us. But lucky, we have a camp, a men's camp five miles away. And they came to our camp because one has a wife. My husband, who became my husband, I was with his cousin in one room. He came to stay with us.

In middle of the night, when the soldiers came to our camp and they opened the door, there was always a man there.

And if there a man, they won't touch a woman. They went away.

And they send them, go to the city. There are plenty women. And you can do something with them. Don't touch these girls because they are our wives. So then we moved away right away from the city, from this camp.

We moved into the city because the city was not far away. And all the German, they went away. They were afraid of the Russians. So they left the houses empty. So we moved in for a short time, till we find transportation to go home.

And how were you eating during that period?

The men support us. They went to the farmers. And they just took anything they saw-- flour, and sugar, and bread. And they brought to the girls. And we ate together. We have a kibbutz. And there-- and we so-- oh, we were in heaven. They brought everything. They brought chicken, they brought meat, anything they found by the farmers, they bring-- they brought in.

They said, you got to give us. We are the police. And if you are not going to give us, we're going to kill you. But they didn't kill anybody. We were not this type of people just to kill people. And we survived like that. And then we went home because my dream was go home because my brothers, they are alive and my whole family.

How did you manage to get a train?

There was-- till I got there, there was train, not like passenger train, but like for animal trains. So we got into this train and took us from our camp home, maybe two weeks. They stopped on every station. We went down, we looked around, we got some food. I don't know how-- somehow, the men always organize something for us.

And we couldn't travel alone. We have to take a few boys with us because we were afraid again. Because the Russian soldiers came to the train too and looked for packages, if we have something to take away from us.

And when I came to my city, there was a few people who survived. And they said, there is a committee, a Jewish organization who are organize all the letters who comes from Russia, from all over to look for survivors.

Did you know then what had happened?

Then I found out.

Only when you got back to your town?

Because there was a man who came from Russia. And I told them where my brothers were. He said, if your brothers was in this city, the German came in. And I don't thinks they're alive.

And I didn't get any mail because I read every letter came in from everybody-- none of my brothers. Went to the Red Cross and I gave all the information about the names of my brothers and what city in Russia they were. And they should look for them. I have no answer.

So I was in my city for about six weeks. And I said, there is no use to live there. I have nobody. Nobody survived. And I found a woman who survived. And she told me about my sister. My sister was killed too and her brother-- and her-- my brother-in-law. They went to the gas chamber.

And did you then find out about your mother and little brother?

Yeah. I found out everything.

How did you find that out?

There were people there went in the same time with my mother and my brother. And they told me about this. Your brother would be maybe alive if he wouldn't manage to go with your mother. And this right side went to the gas chamber. And the left side, they sent out to the camps, to the work camps. So right after the war, I find out everything.

And so were other people in your situation, that is, really not knowing the extent of what happened until the end?

Till the end. And in my camp and all my friends, they didn't know what happened. We didn't have any communication there were no newspapers. We were working day and night. We have two shifts-- a morning shift and a night shift. And we came home tired, hungry, sick, went to bed, get up in the morning, and back to work.

So we have no idea what was going on outside. We thought, well, someday, we're going to be free. We were so hoping. We were so anxious to be free and to live. You're young. I was still a young woman. And all of us were very young.

And our dream was so high. My gosh, when we're going to be free, we're going to be the happiest people. What we going to-- all the people are going to be very proud of us that we could survive such a hard life. And we're going to tell all our parents what happened to us. We're going to be united again together. This was our dream all the years. And this keeps us alive. Otherwise, we wouldn't be alive anymore if not.

In the camps, with the other girls that you were with, there was-- you mentioned that before the war, you were a Zionist.

Yeah.

Was there any talk about that or just survival?

Just survival. Because we were so sick and tired, hungry, always wet. When we came home from work, we have to keep ourself clean too. Otherwise, they would shave our heads. And there was only one hour for us to grab a bucket of water. And if you don't grab the water, you don't have it anymore. And you have to stay in line for the soup. The lucky, we were three girlfriends, very close together. So one was in the line for the food. Two of us ran in and took two buckets of water.

And when we have our soup, we ate the soup, we went to the washroom, and we wash ourself, take off the clothes, wash in the same water, wash our hair, and put on the wet clothes on our body, dry our clothes out. Because we didn't have any changes to keep us clean. Because if we are not clean, they always came and look in our hair, if our hair is clean enough. Otherwise, they shave our heads.

And did everybody do this? Was everybody able to do this?

Yeah. The Hungarians girls, they have more problems. They weren't as organized than we. They have problem. And all of them have shaved heads because they didn't keep theirselves clean.

Why do you think they were not as organized?

Because they came to our camp 1944. There were only one year in camp. And they were so spoiled, they didn't know what to do. They were crying constantly. They came from work, they didn't care to grab water, to wash themselves, nothing. They just went to bed without washing, without doing anything. They were just spoiled, I think so. We were-- we went through so many years, all the tortures. So we were a little bit more organized than them.

I think I'm going to close now. This is Stan Garfinkel. Our Holocaust survivor today has been Celia Rosenfeld. This project is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland section.