

[TEST TONE] I am Dan Garfinkel. Today, we are interviewing Celia Rosenfeld, a Holocaust survivor. The project is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland Section.

We're continuing our discussion of your experiences as a survivor Mrs. Rosenfeld. Perhaps, we can go back to the town where you lived, with your family, before you were taken away and discuss some of the developments there. For example, when the Germans came, did they establish a ghetto?

Not right away. First of all, when they came in, they start taking young people to work on the streets. Right away, they started burning all the temples. Then they started coming to the houses and take all the goods. Like we have silver candelabras, you know? And then the brass candlesticks, and they took the jewelry away. They even pulled my ear. I was wearing earrings. They almost pulled my ear through, till I was able to take my earrings off. They took all the watches, my mother's jewelry. Anything we have on, we have to give it away.

And then they start with a ghetto, you know, to take away the people, in one section of the city, not to get in touch with other people.

What had that section been that you were taken to?

That was closer to the temples, where we used-- where most of the Jews live. So they took us. We have to leave our home, take anything was possible to take, and move in, like two or three families in a room. Or it was a smaller room, so we were lucky. I was with my mother and my brother and myself in one room that was half, like that. We have just two beds and a table and a little stove. That's all we had in this room. And we lived there. Because we were lucky. At least we have not share our room with anybody else.

But this was in a larger building, where there were many other people.

Yeah, a big building. Yeah. That was a big three-story building. So there, we moved there. And around this neighborhood, there, we spread them all out.

Were people, at that time-- again, you said, earlier, that you thought all of this would be over with.

Very soon. We thought three months at the most. And we're going to be free and never happen. It was a bad dream.

What about a Jewish committee or Judenrat, was anything of that sort established?

Well there was a Judenrat, but they couldn't do too much. They tried to do as much as possible. They said, don't send the people away. We're going to give you anything you need. There was a time, I remember this, because my mother said, there, we have to get together so much gold and silver and money for the German. If we are not have that, they're going to take the nicest and the richest people of the town, and they're going to kill them. Which we took everything we had, put together and give the Germans. But how many times can we have this amount to give them to save their life? To the end, they still took the people and killed them.

So it was--

The most important people in the city, the richest people. So we gave them enough money. And we took all the silver and gold and money, anything we had to give them, to save the people's life. But we did it once. But the second time, we didn't have anymore. This was the Juden-- I mean the Jewish organization who took care of that. But to the end, they took them anyway. And they killed them.

Were the people who composed the Judenrat, in your town, respected people? Were they the leaders of the community even before the war?

Well, there was always a Juderat in our city-- very nice. I remember them. You know, I knew them. They were together

with my father, always, in the temple-- very religious people. But I didn't have any idea about this organization. I know it's a Judenrat. They have elections. My father always thought, oh, my, he's not good enough. This man would be bad. But I never took any interest about it. Like I mentioned, I was a little bit too young for that.

And these same people, they keep up the Judenrat. And they did so many things. They tried to do all kinds of things to save the city and to save the people. And they thought, soon, it's going to be over. And we will survive and everything is going to be all right. But they didn't.

There was, like I mentioned, there was this family. And they have a bakery. And they have their own home. And they put so many other families in their home. And they saw chimney coming out of the-- smoke came out of the chimney. And this was the Polish people. They reported this to the Germans, that this family, probably, they are bakers. They have a bakery before. And they probably baked bread. And they were not allowed to do this. And the German came. And they took the whole family. And they hanged them. And I have to watch them-- not only me.

Why did you have to watch them?

They took away. Because we should all see they did something against-- they are not allowed to do this. And they bake bread with our permission. And so they took away. I have a little identification card. They took it away. And if I'm not going to be there to watch them, they're going to send me away. So I have to be there. And they were sure that I'm watching exactly what they're doing to them. I never going to forget this time.

Did many other people have to watch?

Oh, lots of people. Very-- oh, my gosh. Anybody who was on this ghetto, on the street, they took away the cards. And I have to-- And when I was there, they gave me back the card.

When you say, "they," these were all German soldiers?

All German soldiers.

But you think it was a Polish person who reported?

Oh, yeah, they did. The Polish people, when the war was, they were very bad to us. If they knew somebody is hiding, they went to the German and report. They show their real character, how they hate us. Because a lot of people could be alive if they wouldn't do that. We could hide in the little forests. We could hide, you know, places. Wouldn't hurt them. But the minute they find out that somebody hides, they went, right away, to the German and report us. And they picked us up. And that's all.

What about wearing armbands or yellow stars? How did that happen

This was, right away, when the German came in. We have to have a white armband with a blue Star of David. Right away, we have to wear it. In the camp, when we came, we have to wear the yellow, a yellow Star of David. And underneath, there was like a white little thing, that we are a prisoner of war. And we have to wear one here and one on the back in the camp.

When you were still in the town, how was Jewish life carried out, since everybody was crowded together, many of the people were gone?

There was no Jewish life. I mean religious, you mean? We were afraid of everything. Well, we still have Bibles in the house, hidden. You know, God forbid, they would find us out. But there was no temples, no getting together. There was no organization. Everybody was just, from day to day, just to survive-- enough food in the stomach and to keep a little bit warm in the house.

We used to start burning our furniture, because we didn't have nothing for the stove. So we break our tables and chairs

and put in the little stove, the burning coal stove, just to keep a little bit warm. Because we couldn't go and buy anything. We didn't have anything.

Were there, at this time, in the community, Jewish police?

Yeah.

Who were they and how did--

They young people. One of them was my brother's best friend. They were young people. If you are as a police, they don't send you to the camp. Because they start sending young people to the camp. I was underage. They did not send me. Because every couple of months, they came. And they select people to go to the camp. Then, when I was working in this workshop, they came. And they took me, middle of the night, from my girlfriend's house. And they took me to the police station, to the Jewish police station.

But I was very important in this workshop. I was the head of five machines. I have my machine and four girls working with me. They had to sleeve jobs and a little collar. But the main job I was doing. I put together the whole uniform. And without my help, they couldn't finish the uniform.

So the police-- you know, he was a policeman? And he was my brother's best friend. And he said to the German, you see, if you will take her back, she can continue to work. You are losing money, because she is not there. So the German came, and he took me out from there. They didn't send me to the camp. Because I was working for them. I was very important to this part of work. Without me, they couldn't finish the uniform.

So this was their job. And if they need some people to send to the camp, the police, the Jewish police has to go, from house to house, and take the young people and send them to the camps.

What do you think about that now?

No, I don't blame them. I don't. That was their duty. They would take them anyway, if they would be there or not. So the German would go and take them. After all, we all went. I don't blame them, what they did. They didn't do nothing wrong. They came. And they cried with us. He said, do you think I want to do this? Doesn't hurt me? If I would have my own sister, I have to send her, too. I'm not doing this because I like it. I have to. And to the end, they went, too.

You said you had ID cards. How did you get them? When did you get them?

Well, eventually everybody has ID card, ID card. Because what's the name and how old.

You had them beforehand?

No, no, no, just during the war. Everybody has one. Because they have to know my name and my age.

So that people had to register, is that right?

That's right. They have all the records of the people, you know, how old we are and where we live and what's our name. Everybody has this.

You said you were going to tell me something about your sister.

Well, my sister lived in a different city. When she got married, she didn't live in our city. She lives in a different city. So when--

Where was that?

The city she lived? That was five miles away from our city. But I couldn't go to see her. The name was very hard to pronounce-- [POLISH]. Was I could walk there, but I would not. I couldn't do it, because, if they would find me walking there, they would probably, I don't know, kill me.

She was married. And she got pregnant. She has one child. But she was pregnant with her second child. And when they took all the people away, to send to the concentration camp-- they was Judenrein, like this, in our city. And they're not far away-- five miles away. They took their city, too.

And my sister was pregnant. And when they put all the people together, and we have to stay, like hours and sometime overnight, till they select and brought all the people, sick people, young people, old people. This goes this way. This goes this way. And my sister gave birth to her child on the ground. They took this child, and they throw it against the wall. And they took my sister, and they stuck in a train, with so many people, that she choked to death. She didn't survive even to go to the concentration, to the gas chamber. She died in the train.

And her other child?

Went with the father to the gas chamber.

I see. What other subjects have we not covered? How did you meet your husband?

Oh, yeah. I was with my cousins-- with my husband's cousin in camp together. And after the war, we were afraid for the Russians, they shouldn't come to our camp and do something. So he came and stayed in our room. And she introduced me to her cousin. And little by little, we got better to know each other. And six months later, I married my husband.

Where were you then?

In Germany, where I was liberated, in the same city. We got married.

How did you get married, by a judge or?

No, not by a judge. But there was a man, who he was in the Jewish college before the war. He's supposed to be a rabbi. Was a young man, was very religious and very intelligent. And he gave us our marriage. He married us. He wrote our marriage license. And every week, there was a different marriage. Everybody, we got to know each other. And every day was a different wedding there.

And we have a double wedding with this girlfriend of mine, what I live with her. She married my husband's, maybe-- well, in the family. They were maybe the third or fourth cousin. So we have a double wedding. And then we left Germany, because it was occupied from the Russian. We didn't like this regime. So we smuggled to the American zone.

Now, this is after you had already returned to your town in Poland.

Yeah, I was for six weeks there, and I went back to Germany. Because all my friends were there. I couldn't find anybody. And I know everybody is. What am I'm going to do, with the Polaks and the Russians? This was no life for me.

I went back to Germany, to Reichenbach, where I was liberated. And my husband was still there. And he said, well, what did you find out? I said, nothing. I have nobody. So we decide to get married. Then when we came to the American zone--

How did you do that?

It was very hard. The Russians, they captured us on the border. They took us to jail. And we paid them off, with vodka and money. And they let us go.

How did you get money?

Oh, we have, right after the war. Well, we have a little bit of money. My husband was a little-- you know, he was buying and selling all kinds of things. So we made a little-- not too much, but we made a little money. And then my husband has a business, already, in Germany, a butcher shop with a partner. They bought cows, and they went to the things, and they killed the cows. And they sell the meat. And he was always a little-- he got along well with people.

So we came to Germany, to the American zone. I was pregnant already. So we lived there until my son was born. In Feldafing, in Germany. And then we moved to a different city. In 1948, my husband decided we were going to emigrate to Israel. That's our country. And we should be there.

So I left. My son was two years old. Came to Israel. They took my husband to the army. There was still war. I went from one war to the next. It was very hard for me. But I said, we were young. We going to survive. A little by little, we got organized. Then my husband couldn't stand the climate. Was too hot for him. That was very, very bad.

So we decide we're going to go to Canada. My husband had a cousin in Canada. She sent us papers. But the Canadian Consul was not in Germany. It was in Paris, France.

But you were in Israel.

I was in Israel. So we have to go to France. And in France, they didn't give us the visa to go for Germany. Because I was sick in concentration camp. I have the tuberculosis. And when they X-rayed me, they saw that I'm not well. We have to go back to Germany and wait for our quota to go to America-- seven years.

For seven years, my son was in school there. And he came home, every day, telling me, they're calling me, dirty Jew, lousy Jew, pig Jew, and all kind of things. And I have to listen to my son, but my heart was bleeding. One of the teachers-- there was a lady. She beat him once, that he came home with a nose bleeding.

I went to the principal. And everything was on my chest. I told him off but good. I wasn't afraid. I said, I'm not going to live anyway in Germany. So what do I care? I told them everything was on my mind about the German. I said, she is not going to do this to me. If she's going to touch my son again, I'm going to kill her, even if I have to go to jail. I said, I'm not afraid of the jail anymore. Because, when I was six years in a concentration camp, that was worse than a jail. And I survived. And I will survive again. But she's going to be dead.

Well, he promised me, she's not going to do it again. Then they switch teachers. And next year, he has another teacher. And the day came, then, we got a visa to go to America. This was our happiest time in our life.

My son-- there was no Hebrew school. I have to find a private teacher to give him lessons. And he was very good in Hebrew. And he became very Orthodox, because he was an Orthodox teacher. One day, I came home, and he was wearing his yarmulke and sitting with the Bible. And he was so ashamed when I came in I said, what are you doing? He said, oh, I'm just reading. I said, oh, that's nice.

He said, Ma, you don't mind if I tell you something. I said, honey, tell me anything you want. He said, I just made a special prayer, what I learned in school. If you wanted something should go through, this is a special prayer. And I'm praying that's my bar mitzvah should be in the United States not in Germany. Don't you think a month later, I got the visa to go to America? And he was bar mitzvah six months later. We came to the United States. He's a very young-- wonderful young man.

But another tragedy came. We send our son to college. He was very good in school. Before the graduation, my husband got sick. My son got engaged two months before. He got married. My husband passed away. Now, he's very happy married, has a wonderful wife, a beautiful daughter. She's going to be 9 years old. And she's named after my husband. My husband was only 50 years old. That's my whole story.

You've obviously thought about your experiences a great deal.

All the time.

In what way, if any, have they changed your life or your-- of course, they've changed your life-- changed your outlook on things? Do you have any views today that you think were produced by your experiences in the Holocaust?

Can you explain this a little bit more clearly to me? I didn't even catch up with you.

Is your outlook today, on life, on what's right, what's wrong, what's good, what's bad--

Yeah.

--influenced by what you, yourself, experienced during the Holocaust?

Well, it's very hard to tell. If I would be-- if I would have the experience, right now, I don't think I could do anything different. That was so complicated to change anything. Because this was like a shock to everybody. We didn't know what's going to be and what happen. Not only me or even older people.

You know, young men, they came so strong, young, intelligent, and they walk into the gas chamber like they are going to a vacation. Because they didn't know what happen. They organized us so beautiful that nobody knew what's going to be. They give you a bar of soap with a towel, go and take a shower. Would you dream that you go in and never come out again? Nobody knew that. If the people, like my son said to me, now, Ma, you knew and everybody knew you going for death? Why didn't you do something to them? Fight like there was in the Warsaw ghetto?

I said, Fred, we didn't have any idea. If we would know that, we would probably fight, because what can we lose? We have nothing to lose. We knew we were going to be dead. But nobody had any idea what they're going to do. Everybody thought, well, there are bad people. And there are some, maybe, they are not everybody. Some day, we are going to be free. Forget--

You know, Jewish people, they forgive very easy. So long we going to have, again, our family together, forget everything and that's all. We didn't even dream that something like this going to happen. Sometime-- I'm talking to you, right now. I think I didn't go through this. That was like a dream. And it's written, like, in some book.

Now, I have my granddaughter, who is going to be nine. She started, last year, Hebrew school. And in Hebrew school, they told her about the Holocaust. And she came home and she said, do you know what, mommy? My teacher told me there was a bad man. His name was Hitler. And he killed so many Jews. He was a very bad man. She said, you better talk to grandma, because your grandma went through a Holocaust.

She was so proud. She went back to school and she said, you know what? I don't know what her teacher's name is. My grandma was in Holocaust. She was in a concentration camp. She was proud, you know, that she can tell her. And we're going to go to visit grandma. Grandma come to visit us. I'm going to know everything about the Holocaust. Now, she's questioning me, day and night, what about-- where did I sleep, did I have a toothbrush, and did I have a blanket to cover myself, did I have a single bed or a double bed, what kind of food we ate, what kind of work I did.

It's so funny. She even asked me, grandma, what kind of toilet paper did you use in concentration camp? She's too young to understand. I gave her a little answer. I said, Helene, if you get older, you will know all about it. Right now, I can only tell you little things. We didn't have double beds. We slept together in one bed with so many people. She said, and what? I said, we have two blankets, one underneath and one we cover ourselves up. And when it was very cold, we took both blankets together and we slept on a floor, on a board. This is terrible that you didn't have a mattress or something like that. She takes very much interest about this Holocaust.

My son even taped her a movie about it. And she watches every day. And all the time, she questioned me about. She wants to know everything what was going on.

When you came to the United States, it's a little different, because your son had been born in Germany. But were you able to discuss what happened with your son or other people?

I started to discussing, with my son, about the Holocaust. He knows every little detail. Why? Because my son went to German school, and they start calling him names. He said, Ma, why they are doing this? There was only a few Jewish kids in the school. So I said, sit down, and I'm going to tell you something. There was a man. The name was Hitler. He was very bad. And I start from the beginning. And every time I told him a little bit more and more and more.

And then I found out a German book-- I still have the book-- a young man who survived a concentration camp. And I gave him the book to read. And I said, read word by word, even, no matter how bad it is, you should know what they did to us. And my son knows everything, from A to Z. I didn't miss a word not to tell him about the Holocaust. I have to, otherwise, I would wait till he gets older. But there was a situation, I have to tell him, in his early age, because of his school with the German kids. So he knows everything about it.

If there is a lesson for Jews or for human beings, in general, what do you think it is?

A lesson?

What have we learned? Is there anything that we have learned?

My son start going to school in Cleveland, to high school. And he was born in Germany. He has to take, for college-- right now, you don't need a language to go to college. So I said, honey, take German. He said, Ma, it wouldn't hurt you? I said, look, honey, the language has nothing to do with the people. It's easy for you, because you know the language.

He had a very hard time when we came to this country. He was 12 and 1/2 years old. He didn't know a word English. No school would accept him. I sent him to Hebrew Academy. He was very good in Hebrew. So he was good in Hebrew, but he didn't learn English. And by the time I took him out from there, my friend helped me to go to the board of education. And they send him to John Hay. And he was before the bar mitzvah. And he was there for six months. After six months, he start junior high, which he was behind with a year and a half. But from there, he went to high school, went to college, college graduate, with a master's degree.

You would never believe that he's not born in the United States. He speaks a beautiful English, a very educated man. He married an American lovely girl. So when he went to high school, he took German because he need it for college. They started calling him Nazi. He said, are you crazy? I'm not a Nazi. You speak German better than the teacher. Naturally, he went to school there.

So I said, Fred, you have to tell the teacher this. He went to the teacher, and he explained to him. And the teacher says, listen, boys and girls, I heard about this. You are calling Mr Rosenfeld a Nazi. He's not a Nazi. You want to know something? He lost his grandparents and uncles and aunts. And his parents were in a concentration camp, because he is Jewish. Oh, when they heard this, they apologized to him.

And I always said to him, Fred, you should always hate the Nazi Germans. So he said to me, Ma, you always give me lessons, don't hate. That's not a nice word to hate. So why do you tell me to hate them? I said, Fred, if we are here in this country and somebody is angry with you or he did something you don't like, if you go-- I'm going to say, if you're going to say, I hate them, I would refuse this. Because I don't like the word "hate." But it's a different between the German and the Jews.

But he said, Ma, I know how you feel but please don't hate. I cannot tell them any more, hate. I always said, I don't like him. I don't want to have nothing in common. I have nothing in common. I don't want to listen to them. And forget it, but no hate. Well, because you teach your children the right way. And all of a sudden, he said, Ma, you always told me not to hate. And now you're telling me, I should hate them. So there is no hate in our family, just to tell that. I don't want to just listen to them. They hurt me too much. And I'm hurt. And I will never ever forget the rest of my life. And I said, and you should do the same thing.

When we have the Memorial Warsaw Ghetto, here, and we have the candle ceremony every year-- are you familiar with that?

Yes.

So this year, they gave me to light a candle. But I light the candle in the same generation. So my son came. And we both light the candle, together, which he was very impressed with it. All the speeches we have, he bought a tape. And he puts on the television, so Helene and my daughter-in-law came and my granddaughter. They were very, very impressed with it.

And again, my granddaughter said, Grandma, why do we do all things? So my son sits with her. He's very patient. She's a very intelligent girl, my granddaughter, not because I'm prejudiced-- very smart girl. She reads a lot. And she knows. She likes to know everything what was going. So he explained to her, there was a city in Poland, when the people started fighting with the Germans. They didn't want to leave the city. And after all, to the end, they got killed. And we celebrate, every year, this time of the year, Passover, when they all got killed. And we make like a memorial service after them. So we light the six candles after the 6 million. She said 6 million Jews? That's a lot of people. The numbers, it's very hard for her. So she came and she was-- they were very impressed with this, too.

So my son continue and all the things we are doing now. We don't have too much time to live. The time is running out. So we wanted, they should stay with the second generation and I hope with the third and following and following. That should never be forgotten, what we went through.

What I'm telling you, if I have to tell everything what every little detail, I have to sit for months and months. I'm just telling you, you know, what I can explain to you in little details. But everything is a big book to write about our life, what we went through, all the little details.

I'm just going to ask maybe one more thing. In say, one of the camps, can you give me an idea of a day? What it was like from the moment you got up in the morning?

Yeah, I can give you that.

Just step by step.

Yeah. We get up, every morning, 4 o'clock in the morning. We have to do our room.

How did you get up? What woke you up?

Oh, the Germans. They was-- they came with a flashlight. Now, we were locked up in the room. We had like a little hallway, this big. We couldn't go to the toilet out. So we have a bucket. And we have to go. And this was our room. And when they unlocked us, they knock on the door, and say, get up, get up. We have to get up. And every day, two girls have to take care of the room. The room has to be spotless.

This pile, the bucket has to be cleaned up, all the beds have to be in order, like the soldiers', with a little square. We have a little chair here. This chair has to be-- the blanket has to be straightened up. Wash the floor-- wash? With plain water, the floor has to be washed, cleaned up when we leave this room. And if this room wasn't spotless, they took all the blankets, everything messed up. We got a good beating and go back and do it and be time to work. So we try to do our best.

So when this was cleaned. And we have, in our room-- every room, for the 33 girls, we have a kapo. Did you hear about the word, "kapo?" That means she was in charge of the room and of all the girls to go to work. She didn't work, this girl. She was like--

Who was she?



One of us, of our girls.

How was she chosen? Well, they ask, who would like. For the kapo, it was easier to be. She didn't have to work. And she got two soups a day. We get only one soup a day. As a kapo, she got two soups. So most of the girls, they liked to do it, you know? So she got up. Girls, do this, do this, straighten up everything. She was sure everything should be in order. Then we went to work. And she went with us to work.

In the factory, she was in charge, too. If somebody got sick or we have any problem, the kapo has to report to the SS.

Did the group like this person?

There were good ones and were bad ones. The last one of my kapo, she's in the United States, here. She's my best friend. I'm not going to mention her name. She was wonderful-- very lovely girl. She tried so hard to please everybody. No complaint. But other girls were very nasty.

I have one, before, and walking to work, something came into my eye. And I had a swollen eye, like this. And I was afraid to complain. Because if you stay three days in the camp, sick, and they need some people for the gas chamber, they come and pick you up. So I was afraid to be sick.

So I was working on three machines. And they were so bad. The thread was breaking and breaking all the time. I have to thread this. And my eye was bothering me. She could-- she was in charge to change my machines, to give me to a better machine. So I ask her. I said, would you please help me? I said my eye hurts me so much. I can hardly see to thread the needles all the time. She said, you still have one eye. I said, yeah, but it hurts me. She said, well, let me know if you get blind on the other eye, then I will change the machines for you. This was one of our girls. There were some very nasty. This particular girl was very nice, the last one.

So then, when we got home from work--

Well, wait.

Yeah.

You cleaned up the room.

Yeah.

And what happens after that?

Then we have like a big yard. And there were the Appell. We stood up. This part is going with this kapo and with this SS to work. We walk to work, six miles a day, to, from. This was a little town where our camp was. We live in Langenbielau. And we work in Reichenbach. So we have to walk to work. Then they select, you know, this group goes first, this next to a different section. And we walked to work. We came to work. We start working. And we--

Still nothing to eat?

No. No. All day, nothing. We work for eight hours. We have morning shifts and night shifts. When the night shift came home, we got up and go to work. And then we change-- one week was a night shift and one week was a day shift. Like we came in the morning. We work. Came to work. We work for eight hours. And we came home. When we came home, the night shift got up and went to work.

When we came home from work, we have to stay in line for the soup. And we have like a brick bread. The bread was like a brick, square. And we cut this, one bread for 12 girls. So each slice of bread was an 1/8th of an inch thick. This was for the day. So we supposed to have this slice of bread for breakfast. But could you? Would you be able to keep a slice of bread, when we were so hungry, To keep for next day? So we ate it, right away, with the soup. It was a very thin

soup, practically like water. And all day long, we didn't eat.

And then, after the soup and bread?

We went into the-- yeah, we washed ourselves. You know, we tried to wash our clothes and wash our hair. And we went into the room. And we talk and we cried and we talked stories and we were dreaming about our better days. And we fell asleep, tired, 12 miles a day and eight hours to work without food. We fell asleep and get up, next morning, again.

Were there days when some of the girls were sick? And

Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

And taken away?

Oh, sure, a lot. We had one girl, we didn't know what happened to her. She got sick for a few days. And then we begged her, please, go to work. Then, finally, she couldn't. And they piled up. Because there was a special room for the sick, like a little hospital. But we didn't have no nurses, no doctors. There was one girl. She knew about. She was a nurse, so. But we didn't have any medication.

When I had problem with my eye, I thought I'm going to lose my I. I didn't-- I got up in the morning, and that was closed. I couldn't open the eye. But I didn't have water, even, to wash out my eye. The only good part was, when we worked, after we finished our work, 10 minute before, we went into a washroom, with hot water, to wash our hands. Because this was a dirty job with oil. We have to oil our machine, clean up every day our machines. I have machines to clean up. So our hand was dirty. So they allowed us, for 10 minute, to go into this room to wash our hands.

And we took parts, you know. There were like two sinks with hot water. So a few girls would run in first, wash their hand, let the other in. We got undressed. We washed ourselves, first, put on back, so we were clean. So we took parts, you know? So each day, two other girls could go and wash herself. This was the best part of it, that we have a little bit hot water to wash our hands.

And you struggled to keep clean always?

Always. I never had my head shaved all the years. Because was-- you know how you look, a girl without hair? They did a few girls, they shaved her head. They were younger, maybe, and they didn't know what to do. And they got lice. So. Then another part.

We came from-- one camp was that all the men got typhus. They got sick with typhus. They died like flies. And then who survive-- my husband was in this camp. And he survived from all the other. You could count on fingers how many people survived. My husband survived.

And then they took them away to another camp. And this camp was so dirty. Did you ever see a blanket walking? This blanket-- we came to this camp. We have to take over this camp. We're going to sleep there, live there. This camp-- this blanket was full with lice. This blanket was walking on the ground. We took over this camp. We have to shake the blankets out, clean them out, clean our room. And we live in this camp. We have no choice. We have to have a head over our-- a roof over our head.

Did you have utensils for the soup that were yours or how did you?

Yeah. We have like not-- we have like a aluminum can, and that was shaped out like this. And we have a spoon and this little dish. So only a spoon and a little dish. So when we stay in the line, with our dish, they put in the soup. And we ate with the spoon.

You mentioned earlier that you were really isolated from the rest of the world. Were there rumors of what was going on beyond the camp in the war? Did you hear about things that happened?

Oh, you mean when I was still home?

When you were in the camp?

No, we didn't have no idea, nothing. Because we have-- we didn't have any information. We didn't have any information from anybody what was going on. We lived from one day to the next. We didn't know nothing. We just hoped someday we're going-- it's going to end. It's not going to be forever.

And when the bombing raids finally did come, was there-- were people happy about that?

Very happy. We thought, well, where they are bombing, something is going on. We were not this time. We saw something is going on. We used to have more SS women working with us. They disappeared. Every day was less and less and less. And then they said, we are not going to work tomorrow, because it's dangerous. You stay in the camp-- one day. And the third day, they were gone and nobody was there. We were left alone.

And then that day was May the 9th, 9th of May, 1945. We were liberated from the Russians.

Thank you. 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.