

Good afternoon. I'm Bernice Harel. And today, we are interviewing Julia Simon, who is a Holocaust survivor. This is the second tape of our interview. The project is sponsored by Cleveland section, National Council of Jewish Women. When we were talking before, Julia, you were telling me about finding your brother, Jack, and that he was apparent in the lager across the street from you.

Jack ran into block 14 a few times and said that he's with my father across the street in block 13. He said, he doesn't know how long they're going to stay, but until they're going to stay, he's going to try to sneak in, which it wasn't allowed. He wasn't allowed to do it.

And I was at that time with my sister, still with Esther. And he came a few times until they were across the street. All of a sudden, he stopped coming. And we realized that it's woman crossed the street in the same block. So we knew that they lived there, that he's not there anymore. This is the last time I saw him until the liberation.

Do you know where he went from there?

Well, he said-- after the war, he said, he went with my father to Buchenwald. And then they went where my father died, which was Dachau. I think, in Dachau, he said, he worked with my father. And my father always watched over him. He was a child. He was about 14 years old-- 14 maybe. And my father worked in the kitchen, he said. And they had plenty to eat as long as he was in the kitchen, until my father got sick.

They also marched a lot in very bad weather. And he said, my father carried the rabbi from our town and for quite a few days. And then he got cold. And he had something in his throat. And they found him in the morning dead.

He went to visit him every day. And they had a separate place there where they kept the sick people. And he didn't find him in bed anymore. So he went out in the backyard.

And we had numbers. We weren't known by names in Auschwitz or in any other camps, I guess. So he found his number on his big finger. And he was dead. And this was five days before liberation that my father died--

Oh, wow.

--in Dachau. And then, again, I found Jack-- are we by liberation already?

Well, almost.

In Auschwitz--

I wanted to ask you, were you liberated from Auschwitz? Or did you also get taken to other camps?

No, after they killed my sister, after she was picked out, and I knew she was-- went to the crematorium, when it was again they picked people for work, I again, right away-- because until then, I didn't want to go to leave her because if you couldn't work, they wouldn't pick you, they burned you.

And she was pretty thin at that time. She fell into a canal and hurt her leg. And I kept her covered on the bunk while I worked outside. And I covered it over. Nobody knew she's there. This was still an Auschwitz.

And then when they finally picked her out, later, with about four weeks, they picked me out. And they put us on a train. And they send us to Oberschlesien. This was somewhere in Poland. And there--

Now, was that a work camp?

There, we slept in barns, like hay and big barns. It must have been farmers there. It was a big backyard and barns. And every morning, we went to fields, used to grow corn that big already. It must have been in spring at that time.

And we built there Schützengrabens, they called us. It was big ditches. They went like this-- here, it was narrow, and here, like this. And we marched every morning to work. And we dig those really long-- over those big fields, we dig those ditches. And they used to bring us out once a day soup. And then at night, we marched back to the barns to sleep.

What were those ditches for?

They told us, when we asked there-- they told us, when the enemy comes, for the tanks to fall in. When you go at night, they said, and you go over fields, and you don't see. So that was all across hundreds and hundreds of kilometers of ditches built. And when a tank fell in there, it was very, very deep. Probably, they could catch him or what. I don't know. That's why they called it Schützengrabens.

Or you could hide-- they could hide their own army and shoot out of there. Or god knows what, I don't know. So there, we were-- we did those ditches. I remember, it started to be cold. I never knew what month it is, or what day it is, or what date it is. We never knew that because you had no way. Maybe we were ignorant or something.

But you had no communication, just among your-- the girls and the SS men who took you to work and brought you from work. We went five in the line, long lines, and both sides, we had them. And that's how we came home. So we had no way of knowing. But I think we were there about six months.

After that, at night-- it could have been maybe very early in the morning, it was like half dark and half light, and they started running with us in there. And we were on the run for six months. We were constantly marching. Constantly, we were marching.

As a matter of fact, we started out there at night. And early morning, we noticed the same place where we passed by. So I don't know if they made circles with us or what had happened.

And always, we slept in barns. We walked 12 hours, or 10 hours, or six hours, and then they let us sleep overnight, and always in barns in different towns, in different cities, in different--

But you did work during the day?

No, we didn't. We didn't work, we just marched. We marched all day, we couldn't work. They just-- we asked-- we slept on a German. And we always tried-- we were scared to ask where we are, and what's happening, why are they marching?

And a little boy said, from one side comes the Russian, and from one side, comes the American. So they're running with us out from the-- evidently, from the places where they supposed to come around. So they-- we constantly marched.

We started out 2,000 girls, all young girls, in that transport. And we were liberated 150, 200 the most, from that march. We marched for six months. And later on in the months, a lots of girls died.

But a wagon and two horses always followed us. And people who couldn't walk no more or were very weak, they went on that wagon. I always was afraid to go on that wagon.

One time, I remember, it was-- on both sides was trees. While I'm talking, I never thought of it. I see everything what-- I see it so clearly. They said, we are in Nuremberg one time. It was from both sides forest.

It was beautiful. It was a beautiful street-- not street, what you calling-- a main highway. And on both sides was trees. And we marched there. And I didn't feel so good. I had cramps.

And I went to the side. And a dog jumped me. I still have here a piece. He thought I'm running in the forest. And he jumped me. Because they always were constantly with big German Shepherd dogs. And he cut out a piece of my meat here. And I was bleeding all night long. In the morning, I saw I was all bleeding.

So they actually marched you into Germany at one point?

Yeah. We were all the time in Germany. Germany-- but it was like-- one time, we came to a little, beautiful town. And I saw Klatovy, Domazlice. I never heard of those names. And it was in Czech.

And the ladies from the high windows ran-- they threw cooked potatoes down for us. They saw those transports coming. And I tried to pick up a potato. Three times, I went down. I was so weak, I couldn't pick up a potato anymore.

And then they start, I remember, one time, Domazlice. I saw Domazlice. I says, my god, we are in Czechoslovakia, we are-- which we weren't before the war there because this was real Czechoslovakia. It wasn't occupied Czechoslovakia, like we were occupied from Czechoslovakia by the Hungarian. And the Hungarian occupied again and again.

And they started yelling, the women. They said to us, from where are you? I says, [CZECH]. And she starts screaming, [CZECH]-- this is our children. This is our children. They ran.

I remember, I had a sip of warm soup. And you smell the parsley, or what you actually smell the parsley. It was a barley soup-like. But it was white with green. And she ran from one person to the other with a whole pot and gave us some this, and this, and that one. It's the first time was warm. And you felt actually you smell parsley. And you were in Czechoslovakia.

And this was with the SS, or you were still marching?

This was with the SS, still going, still from-- we-- thousands of miles in those six months. We went through Poland. We went through Czechoslovakia. We went through Germany.

And lots of girls died. We slept one night, we lie down, like a big field. And you had-- everybody had a gray blanket. And we put it on. And we slept on this.

In the morning, we got up, the snow-- we were all covered with snow. I don't know what month it was. You were all-- must have been November, maybe December. That time, lots of the girls didn't even get up. They were frozen stiff there. They died right then. Then when we lost most girls, including my cousin that time.

Lots of girls was there left. And I envied them so much that they don't have to do it anymore. They don't have to go no more, and that wagon always behind us. Then I had an uncle's daughter. She was older than me. It was my mother's uncle-- was mine uncle. She used to call him uncle. Her name was Libby, very beautiful girl.

And she said to me, help me. I can't walk no more. Help me. And me and my cousin tried to pick her up. And she was so heavy, we couldn't pick her up. And he came over. And he says, low, slow, march on, march on. And we left her then. And he went over and shot her and just with his boot, right in there.

In the ditch.

In the ditch. And I felt so guilty for this, why couldn't we try some more to help her. He just tried pushed her in in there. And this was the end of her.

And when I were sick, I had that-- I passed lots of blood that time when I told you. And my cousin who's now in Canada, her mother was my father's sister. She resides now in Toronto. I was with her and with two other sisters. One was the older sister.

So you were with two of your aunts then?

Cousins, first cousins.

It was cousins.

No, my aunt went with the babies right in the crematorium like my mother. She just wouldn't give up her baby. And she was young. This was my first cousins. My father and her mother were brother and sisters. She lives now in Canada.

And when it happened to me, she says, don't give up. We'll help you walking. She says, don't give up. Maybe it's just you have diarrhea, she says. I says, I passed a lot of blood, I said, it was. You were kind of embarrassed, you were.

But I thought, she says, don't give up. Her sister lived yet that time. And she says, we'll help you. Nobody has to know. I says, please, don't let me on that wagon. Because from that wagon, every day, they disappeared.

Yeah, every day.

Every day, you saw the people on it, they evidently killed them off. So they helped me for a few days. And then I came to. And I kept on walking. She died, the older one. She was a big woman. She was married only a couple of years. But she was tall and big. Tzivi was her name. She died while we were walking up a hill. I don't know where we were at that time. She walked up that hill. And she just couldn't walk no more.

Was there ever any time that you felt like you didn't want to live, that you felt yourself giving up?

Lots of times. When it came closer to the winter, one day, there in the morning, we slept in a big barn. And it was different sections. You slept all over the place. And we were there with my father brother's daughter. Raise was her name. She was a few years younger than me, maybe like my sister.

And we got up. And it was rain and snow mixed together, was a real bad day. And they didn't give us to eat anything for four days that time. And you were so weak. But they tell you, you have to go. I always was-- I wanted to die, but not from-- I was afraid of guns. I didn't want they should kill me like I saw killing, just shot you and laying there.

I never thought I will survive. I never thought that I will come home. Or you never thought of this. You never-- it'll end when it end. And that's it. That morning, we got up. It was cold. And I had the two wooden shoes at that time. So I put a little straw in there because they didn't fit. They were too big.

While we went out that door from the barn, I saw Raise laying there. And I went with my leg, I says, hey, come on. And she just-- and I saw, she's dead. And I said to my other cousin, my god, how lucky can you get? We have to go on. And she's there laying so peacefully, nice. She had her eyes open. I never saw a dead person till then. So she died there.

Every day, some other people died. But that wagon bothered me. That wagon, I was afraid of. I was so scared of that wagon. I did everything I could just not that wagon followed us. All over, every day, other people on that wagon, all next day, they disappeared. And you kept walking on and walking on.

So as desperate as you felt sometimes, you were also determined to survive, though, it sounds like.

At worst days, you never thought that you going to survive. You never, never-- I never thought of this.

You just saw it in terms of the next day--

I just thought of next day.

--from one more day.

I thought, maybe next day, we're going to get to eat something. Maybe next day, you're going to come somewhere. And that's all you were thinking. And what kept us alive is we sat like bunches. Instead of sleeping, we talked to back home.

For Rosh Hashanah, it came. And the Blockalteste, the one who looked over us, was in charge of us, she was lighting

candles-- Rosh Hashanah, I remember. This was still in Auschwitz. And I thought to myself, what is she doing? Whom is she kidding? She still thinks of-- that's all you thought when you were-- the six months you were marching, that maybe tomorrow, you'll find a little potato or you'll find a little something.

While we were digging the ditches in Oberschlesien, you always weren't too far from a forest. And I always used to rest on the shovel what I was digging with. And I looked at that forest. And always, they told me, what are you looking there? What do you see there?

I says, my brother's name is Hersh. And he's in the army, I thought at that time. And I says, I have a feeling, would-- he could come out from that forest and save me. I fantasized. I always looked in the forest. Maybe, somebody going to come out, grab me, and run away with me.

This what kept you going. And maybe tomorrow they'll give warm soup. Maybe we'll find nice people who want to save us. But you never thought of surviving or-- I don't know. You didn't think of anything. You just sort of--

Did you ever think, among the positive things you thought about, that maybe tomorrow there'll be something, did you ever think about Israel or Palestine then?

No. I didn't think of that at all. See, we were thinking, they took us from our home, from parents, from sisters, and brothers, and our home, and warmth, and animals, and neighbors, and girlfriends, and playing, and what for did I need Israel at that time? You talked about it, you went to meetings, you danced, you happy-go-lucky.

But I never thought, I want to leave my home and go. My brother did, the oldest brother. He always talked about it. He went to the-- he want to go to the Moshava. And although we were 11 children, and my mother always said, what do you mean, you want to go away from home? There was no such a thing. When my father said to my sister, to the one who's now here, she was 16 at a time, to go to Belgium, my mother was-- what do you mean, to send away a--

Beside herself.

--child in the world? She says-- he says, maybe there, it's-- little did he know that it did come the Germans there. And she was sent-- she escaped to Switzerland. Some people made her papers, Gentile papers. And she escaped to Switzerland. And there, she found the Czechoslovakian consul and took care of her till after the war. That's how she survived.

You mentioned thinking about your brother in the army, that maybe he would save you. Did you ever-- you or your friends ever think that maybe the Russians would save you, the Russian Army would come, or the American Army? Did you ever think about them at all?

We thought about the army, I tell you why. We thought that something is going on. But we weren't too optimistic that it could happen. We fantasized, which it did happen eventually.

One day, it was a beautiful day, and everything was green. We always walked with fields, very little with the main roads or with-- always mostly with fields. And there was a bombing. It fell. I thought, we going to all be killed.

There was wagons. And there was a lot of SS ladies which marched with us, which sometimes, they were worse than the men. And there was lots of soldiers with wagons.

Evidently, their food-- for us, they didn't feed at all. We just got-- we were in a barn, and you found something. We ate straw. It started in the spring to grow little grass. We picked up the grass, and we ate it, and things like that. But that day, it was bombing. And we were so happy, we looked up, and we weren't afraid to anything.

And we saw a few horses of theirs killed, of the army's, big horses. They just were laying there. And we looked, and passed them, and we kept on going. And once, she was here not long ago from Israel, our neighbors-- my girlfriend went with her mother with the children. But she survived. She didn't happen to have a child at that time.

And she just passed through. And she came with a little red meat to me, raw meat. And I was very weak already at that time. It must have been more towards the end. And she says to me, here's a piece of meat. Try to chew on it. I said, I never saw such a red meat. It's raw. She says, please, just chew on it, she says.

She was a little older than me. Because her sister was my friend. She must have been about two years older than me. She says, chew on it. And it'll give you some kraft, she says, some energy-- kraft-- energy. So I chewed on it. And it was very sweet, were so sweet. And then I said to her, Raise, why is that meat so sweet?

She says, I tear it up from those horses what she says they killed. For some reason, she was smarter than I was. I wouldn't touch nothing. One thing, I said, I helped carry for the girls if they organize something-- they called it organized-- like it was big piles in Germany for the winter. They were hiding there the sugar, what they used to call it, big things.

Oh, the beets, sugar beets?

Sugar beets, white ones, big ones. I helped them carry that. And they gave me a piece. I helped them carry all kind of things. But I never went out of line because there was two sisters. And she went on a pile to grab a beet of this. And they shot her right on that pile.

And her sister ran, and cried, and called her, and cried on her. She was all got up-- all bloody. And we dragged her back. And she says, no, I want to die with my sister. And they shot her-- and both of them.

So never did I want to go out from my line. I helped carry if somebody organized something. I helped carry. I didn't want to die from a bullet. I wouldn't mind dying, but I was scared of those-- it looked so ugly, whomever I saw shot.

It looks-- that baby in-- that baby [NON-ENGLISH], I can't forget how he threw it up, and he shot it, and it just fell down like pieces of blood. That I am-- and from then on, I didn't want to be shot. I just didn't want to be. So I helped carry them the things. And they gave me a piece of this, a piece of that.

So I wanted to go back to the-- we walked that time, was a very warm day. I don't know what it-- what day or month it was. But the sun started shining. And it was already late in the afternoon. And it still was so nice. Well, for the first time, I felt some warmth. I didn't shiver, like I'm shivering now.

And they didn't have where to put us. We were next to a barn. And it was like mud there in front of the barn, lots of mud. And they didn't want to open those gates. And people came out. And we couldn't go in. And we waited for a good hour outside in the line. All of a sudden, we saw black soldiers coming out of there.

And we thought, black-- where is those black people from? And it's not like Germans. Germans were light green with those lapels, with those SS things. This was different people. This was soldiers who were captured by the Germans. And they were sleeping in those barns.

And because they wanted us to sleep on that mud and things, the soldiers, they couldn't kill because there was exchange things. And American soldiers, evidently-- that's what I know now, I'm more sophisticated and know more about it than then. And the soldiers rebelled and said, the women are going to sleep in. And we're going to sleep out.

And they-- sure enough, they came out, soldiers black and white. And we said, you think this could be American. But America is so far away. How could America come here? Because we always say-- used to get-- my father's sister always used to get from America packages, shoes with long things, I remember. And we said, no, it can't be.

But they won. And they took us in there. And all along in the barn, it was wooden things. And they put us there, the soldiers little potatoes, and potato peels, and corn-- raw corn-- but we feasted on this till the next day, what they left us on the site to.

And then they had to give another place to sleep. Then we start talking. This must have been American-- thanks goodness, I was liberated by Americans, which it was in a very funny thing too.

But to the end, that marching-- after we went away there, we arrived once to GrÃ¼nberg. And we saw that there was a factory which they made the cloth-- Weberei-- I don't know how to say in English.

There was a textile factory? Yeah.

Textile factory, that's it. It was a textile factory. And we found there Polish girls. And believe it or not, there were showers. We could each take a shower. And it was GrÃ¼nberg there. The other girls, they took out of there, we were there a few days. We were allowed to take a shower. And we had there bunks. And we got there food. And the girls there put us little things what they had.

And then from GrÃ¼nberg, we kept on going. And we arrived-- no, Helmbrechts was before GrÃ¼nberg. After we marched about six months, we arrived to a camp which it had those wires too, but a much smaller scale. And it wasn't electricity there. It just was like a big building, with a big backyard. And there we were about six weeks.

What was the name of that camp?

Helmbrechts. Helmbrechts, I remember.

Is that where you were liberated from?

No. Oh, no, after that, we kept on marching. We were in Helmbrechts a few days. We found those girls. And we rested a little bit. And we took a shower, like I said, and then back to the marching. When we started marching again, I don't know after how many weeks, we kept on different cities, always different places, always different cities.

We came to a camp, Falkenau. It also was a small camp. And again, we rested a week or so. And then we kept on marching again. And every time, we were fewer, and fewer, and fewer. We started out, like I said, 2,000 girls. It seemed a handful, like 200.

And then, we-- after we arrived to GrÃ¼nberg, the girls came with us already, those from there started marching too with us. And we marched together. One night, it was like-- it was not dark and not light. We came to a very big barn. I don't know the city of it or what. And we supposed to go in and sleep.

Is there three sisters-- one was 14 years old, the oldest was a teacher in Hungary-- her name was [NON-ENGLISH]-- and the two little sisters. She said, don't let's go in. It was a little water there. And it was long, wooden, round things, like whole piles of it.

And the four of us crawled between those piles under the water. And we slept all night-- not slept, like this. We were waited, it should get light a little. I don't know what we were thinking, it was so stupid of us to do that. But this helped me.

In the morning, when it start being lighter a little bit, there was a big forest. Here, they was-- we were sleeping in the barn, which we never went into it. We were sleeping in those wooden things in that long under water all night.

And that big forest, it was very bare, the tree. It was lots of trees, but very bare. It was-- could have been early February or something like that. But because it was pretty cold all night, we were freezing there.

So before it got light, the four of us started walking towards-- we saw there a house and a light far away. So we thought, if we go through that forest and come in the house, somebody might-- because we saw it goes on so long, something must give. Something-- it can't go on too much longer.

So we start going in that forest. We went past. And we start going in that forest. All of a sudden, we heard shots ringing

out. And then I thought, uh-uh, I never wanted to be shot. That's it of us. If you did a thing like this, leave your transport, and it was closed, that barn, and everything. The four of us start walking. So they shot after us. And he was an elderly man, a short man. And we came to him. And he says, follow me, and go into the barn.

So he took us. How did you get out of there? It's not open. And we said, we slept in those. And he took us in there in the barn. And we mixed out right away between the others. We lie down.

And then a girl who was our neighbor and her sister said, they going to crawl up on the attic there in that straw. And she's not walking anymore. She says, she can't. That's it. So I said, then I'm going to do it too. She says, you better not.

So she crawled up there. And by the time I wanted to crawl up, she kicked me down. And I fell down. And I thought to myself, one way or another, I can-- maybe a day or two, I would have last because I was very weak.

While I was crawling, I was so shaking that I couldn't reach no more. And when she came the second time, I crawled again. She came the second time. I says, if you don't leave me to come up, I'm going to tell them that you're hiding there.

But there was other four girls, Polish girl, who came with us too from GrÃ¼nberg. And when I told her this, she let me come up. And we were left there in the hay overnight, all night. And we saw the transporters going away in the morning.

The SS men came upstairs, and with those long knives, they tried to punch there in the straw, to see where everybody was hiding. But we crawled into-- way until the edge. We could look out on the street, where you would-- you had to go like this in order to get us. And so they looked all over.

And they didn't-- we were there. And we stayed there the whole day and the whole night. In the morning, she says-- that girl who already let me come with her sister, she said to me-- she was sort of a girlfriend to my brother, who's now here. I says, I would have gone and told them if you wouldn't have left me. So then I didn't want to have nothing to do with her. I was afraid of her.

But there was those two-- three sisters, the Hungarian. And we came down in the morning after they milked the cows and everything, and our transport went. We slept all night. Ruska, one of the four sisters, was there. We left her there in the hay. She carried on so, her sister, I felt so bad for her.

And we crossed that little water. And we came in in a little town. We came in in that little town. And I saw Main. It said Main, I remember-- M-A-I-N-- Main. I never-- it wasn't. We walked into a small house in the morning there.

And she said, who are you? She was very scared of us. She says, who are you? And we said, we was left from a transport. And we can't find them. And we are Hungarian FlÃ¼chtlingen-- we are Hungarian-- sometimes, if you did black market by the Hungarian, they took the family and sent them away. But those, they weren't so severe. So we said-- we were afraid to say, we are Jewish. We would never. This word was taboo those days, Jew.

And she said, I give you to eat. And she talk Czech. I says, wherever we went, they talk Czech. We were Czechs-- because she was Hungarian, [NON-ENGLISH], and the others. So I said-- then I talk Czech. I says, we are Czech. And we don't know where our transport left.

She gave us milk and a piece of bread. And we ate quickly. And she says, this is a Czech town, she says, Sudeten. But she says, please, as soon as you eat-- I have two small children, please, go on. So we ate and we kept on walking. It was practically one big street, the whole town.

And we kept on walking until we picked another blue house. It was blue painted from outside to not wood, those little houses. And [NON-ENGLISH] says-- she was the commander of us four. She said, let's go in here. She says, maybe they can put us up. Where we going to go? We tore off our numbers. We had here numbers-- 71,000.



And we went in. And we come in there. And about 15 SS men are sitting by the table and drinking. And on the stove, potatoes are cooking. And a woman came to the door. And she says, who are you? And she says, we are Hungarian FlÃ¼chtlingen. And our transport went away. And we cannot find them. We don't know what to do.

And an SS man got up. And he came and asked a few questions. And she talked good Hungarian. And she answered. And he talked in German. And he went back to his comrades. And he said, what should we do with those four? And one of them said, take him to the BÃ¼rgermeister, which was the mayor there in this town.

And he put up his-- with the grenade, and took us four, and took us to the BÃ¼rgermeister. And we just pinched each other. And she said, don't say a word. I'm going to be the talker. Don't say a word.

And we came there to the BÃ¼rgermeister. It was a wooden little house. And he stood there. And he said-- he reported that those four girls came in. And they lost their transport. And he cannot find them. What he should do?

And that mayor start yelling at him. And he talked Hungarian. So [NON-ENGLISH] took over. And she said, we're Hungarian FlÃ¼chtlingen. And we lost our transport. And we don't know what to do. And that mayor started screaming at that SS man. He says, those kids don't need your--

Grenade?

--grenade-- no, the rifle. They don't need your rifle. They don't need to be so armed. They need food. They need milk, he says. You take them. And he gave him a name, and take them there and there to this woman. Her husband is in the army. And she has a little boy.

And he took us there to that woman. That woman, we told the same story. And they left us there, the BÃ¼rgermeister said-- the mayor said that you should keep them here for two weeks. And after that, he's going to help you support them and after that.

So every day we were there, there lived another couple, a younger couple. She was alone. She didn't have a husband. Her husband was in the army. Most women, the German women had their husbands in the army. She gave us to eat.

And every day came there in the SS men. And we cleaned their boots. And she said, this is the girls-- everybody knew the four Hungarian girls. And we helped her clean the house, wash dishes. And we cleaned those-- but so many SS men came there every day.

And there, we had already food. They gave us pieces of chocolate. They gave us pieces of things. And nobody knew the difference. And every night, we went up in the attic to sleep. It was there hay too. So once, she sent us to the store. And we went and all to the store. It was just one way was there, one way to go-- what do you call it, a [YIDDISH].

Street, a one-way street?

It wasn't a street, it was the main highway there for them. And down there were some stores. And while we walked to the stores-- it was maybe a kilometer to walk-- we saw on both sides whole boxes with grenades, with bullets, with-- soldiers come, and threw down everything, and ran away.

And so when we came back, and we said something is-- between the four of us, something is going on, something. And [NON-ENGLISH] she was the oldest there. She said, it looks like it's the end of the war. Why would they throw away everything? Why would they-- maybe it's the end of the war. So one night, we went to sleep on the attic.

And early in the morning, that woman went away to shop or something in a different city. A man came and woke us up. And he talked Ukraine. He says, I'm a prisoner of war. The war is over. Who are you? And we said, we're Hungarian FlÃ¼chtlingen. And he says, I'm an Ukraine. I says, I speak Ukraine because in Czechoslovakia, the neighbors were Ukraines. I says, we are from there too. And still, we didn't never say we're Jewish or anything.

And we speak. He says, tomorrow morning, I'll come for you. I have a truck, he says, which I'm not going to turn in for-- he worked for the army, but he was a prisoner of war. He says, I'm coming for you. And I'm going to take you to Eisenstadt. There is a hospital. He says, because the war is over. But, he says, we have to be very careful. Too many people get killed.

He did come the next morning. He lead us down the stairs. He took us on that truck. And we drove maybe an hour before we were stopped. We were stopped. On both sides were soldiers. It was a little store there. And the sun was kind of shining already. It must have been spring.

And we were sitting on that truck. And he gave-- that man who took us on the truck explained there something. And I says to that boy, this doesn't seem like SS men. It seems different clothes. I says, it seems-- but I sat on that truck. And the sun made me very weak. I got weaker and weaker.

And I watched that guy who stood there [YIDDISH]-- who stood there with the rifle, stood and watched. [YIDDISH]-- I don't know how to say it. And he chewed, and chewed, and chewed, and chewed. I says, I'm not going to take off my eyes from him. I want to see what he puts into his mouth and what he takes out. I never saw-- gum, It was gum. We never heard of gum. We never saw gum. We never heard of gum.

And it went by about three, four hours. And they still let us sit on that truck. Then a guy walked over. And he says, what are you? Are you Germans? And we saw white-- in every windows, it was white--

Flags?

--flags, sheets, everything white. And we still didn't know that it's the end of the war. But that guy walked over. And he says, speak English? And we go, no. German? And we said, no.

And he says, what nationality? What? We didn't understand a word. We didn't say, we're Jewish. And we said, we Hungarian, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Hungary. Me America, he says, me Moshele-- Jew, Jew, he says to me. We never thought something like this existed. And we didn't trust them.

No war, he says, no war. Eat, eat, he kept saying, Moshele, Chicago, eat, he kept saying. I didn't know Chicago existed that time. And he said, soon, we'll take you something, somewhere. And they took us.

And it was very cool yet. It was almost night. And he took us on a straight field. And they made fires for us. It was cold. And he brought us-- it was green cans. When you open the can, it was for cookies and a coffee, a package of coffee, which to us, it wasn't familiar those conserves at all.

Oh, those were army-- those-- that was how they packed the food for the army.

Yeah, but we never saw this. We never--

And they call them C-rations or K-rations in a dark green can.

Dark green can. It was a white can that high. I can see that can now. But we didn't trust them. We thought, we're in Germany. What would American Jew do here?

And he didn't speak any Yiddish?

Moshele, he said, Jew, Jew. And we said, Jew, what Jew? Yid, Yid. I said, Yid, we are Yid. I said, we are Jewish. We wouldn't dare to say it before. And he said, no worry, no worry. Take care, he said, take care. This is the first ward-- Ich Chicago, he said, Ich Moshele, Chicago, [YIDDISH], he said.

And he kept us there for-- it was almost night. And then we see Klatovy. We're in Czechoslovakia. And when we told him the truth, that we Czechoslovakian Jews, and we were in Auschwitz, they were crying like children.

And then the Czechs thought they doing us a favor. One Czech woman picked us up. And she gave us to eat, it was very famous in Czechoslovakia, knedliky. You made it from-- it was kneidlach-- it was made from meat.

Potatoes, yeah.

It was made from potatoes, and flour, and it was sauce on top of it. But it was cut. And they gave us to eat this. And I saw them dying. I was at that time about 70 pounds.

We never got to that hospital, to Eisenstadt where he was supposed to-- we never saw that guy because the American took us over. And the Czech came and gave us to eat. We were wandering around the city.

And as soon as we ate that meal, we were out. I don't know what happened, it's just I saw that we were dying. So those American soldiers picked us four up. And they brought us to Klatovy, in the city.

And they brought us to a hospital, which it was a horse hospital, for animals. But it was beautiful. It was in a wood. And I remember those three words and say like I was because I ate that thing.

And then after-- I didn't eat for so long that I almost died when I ate. So I remember, they picked us up. And they put us on a table. And they were talking that evidently, that I'm very weak.

And so for a couple of weeks, they kept us there. And they fed us just with rice soup. And they gave us farina, very light things. And they said, no eat, sick, die-- that time, I didn't know, but now, those words. And they fed us there. They kept us there quite a few weeks, and put us on our feet, and put us on a train.

While we were there, one night, somebody knocked in the window. And he had a beret, he didn't look like the American soldiers. And he spoke Yiddish like I do, which we did very good, Jewish. And he said, is anybody here from Bochkov, is anybody here from Bychkiv? Bychkiv, here?

And I says, yes, I. He says, who are you? And I said, I'm [NON-ENGLISH] daughter. He says, I'm a [NON-ENGLISH] brother. I'm in the English Army from Israel, he said. He kept us there and brought us white bread, and toothbrushes, and toothpaste. And he didn't let us go away from there until we felt good and went about. And I had frozen fingers.

Well, that was--

They took care of us then. And then they put us on the train, and we arrived to Prague.

I think we'll stop here and wait for the third tape. Now, this is, I think, a good point to cut. There are some other things that I'd like to ask you about liberation. And also, we do want to hear about your life afterwards too. OK.