

I'm Bernice Harel, and I'm continuing with the interview of Julia Simon, a Holocaust survivor. This is our third tape. The project is sponsored by Cleveland Section, National Council of Jewish Women.

Julia, when we finish talking before, you were just telling me-- you had told me that-- how the American soldiers had stopped this truck were on with the other three girls, and that a Jewish soldier from Chicago, Moishele, had somehow made you understand that he was Jewish, and that the war was over. And he took you to a place.

It was like a field. There was thousands of people there. And we slept there. They made fires at nights, and we slept there. And we were there for a while, till the next morning, I think.

The rest of the people were left there because there came people from all over, not only liberated people, or not only-- it was with bicycles. Germans were on their way home from work, Germans who were on the way home from school, with children. Everybody was stopped there.

So as they picked out who was directly from concentration, and they took us in-- I think I told you in that hospital.

Right, that some-- a lady who meant well gave you some food. But it was-- you weren't able to eat that much food yet, and you got sick, and then they took you to the hospital.

All four of us, the four girls which stayed together, which was hiding out. And we were in that hospital for quite a while. And they cooked us special food, very light.

They said, we cannot eat because we will die. Stomach no good. They tried to explain the best they knew how. They spoke a few words of German that time.

And they kept us till we were a little well. Like I start telling you before, early in the morning, I knock on the window. And an English soldier with a beret, different than the American looked, he said, is anybody from Bochkov? And I said, yes. And he says, who are you? And I told them, [NON-ENGLISH] daughter-- Martin's daughter.

And he says, I'm [NON-ENGLISH] brother, which I knew his brother. He had a daughter the same age and the same name what I was, Yentl [LAUGHS] And don't ask. He brought us white bread, and toothbrush, toothpicks, and toothpaste-- toothpicks-- toothpaste.

And they kept us there until they healed. My fingers were frozen at that time. And they kept us there until we were well enough, and that [NON-ENGLISH] man took a paper and send us on to Prague.

We came to Prague. There was already an [NON-ENGLISH], which took care of the people who start coming home.

Now what exactly was that, the [NON-ENGLISH]?

[NON-ENGLISH] was-- the building was named [NON-ENGLISH]. But they devoted it to the people who came. Like for-- they made kitchens out of it to put you up for a couple of days till you could go on.

And who ran that?

Then that ran the UNRRA. They called the--

From the United Nations.

Must be. UNRRA. This was in the UNRRA, and it was from Jewish National Fund. And it was involved all kind of, I suppose, American organizations, since I'm so active now in Hadassah. And I'm doing-- I'm a vice president of fundraising for Hadassah, for [NON-ENGLISH].

And they put up kitchens. So they fed hundreds and thousands of people at a time. And they put us up not for long. You could stay there a few days. And then we arrived to Budapest. And there again was kitchens and places where for us to stay. And I was there a few days, or maybe a week. Everything was bombed, and everything was--

And then they put us on a train. That's all I wanted is to arrive home, to be sure if it's true. I thought my father lives for sure. I thought my father. And my mother I knew already by then, that instead of the showers they took him to the crematorium with the children, because Gorbi explained us, that the Blockalteste who was there before us, and she said, don't expect the mothers with the small children, that she said yet in Auschwitz every day she opened with this, on morning. So I thought my father and my brothers are still-- I'm going to find. I knew my sister I won't find, and I knew the smaller ones.

I arrived to Budapest, and I kept searching. We found friends in Bychkiv. We found different people. I found my mother's sister, but I told you, she didn't want to give up her baby. He came home-- not home. I found him in Budapest. He was looking, and he said, I'll take care of you till we get home, until I find my wife. And I told him, you won't find her. And I was there a while.

And then we went again to the train. They disinfected us then. You had just one-- in Klatovy, there where we were liberated, the people, the Czech people, brought us-- I had already a few pair of shoes, a few blouses, a few skirts. If they fitted or not, but you had already--

You had something.

They gave us a little valise. They were so nice to us, the Czech people.

And then we came to Budapest. And we were there for a while. And then I just wanted to go towards home, towards Bychkiv. It was a small town. I was so far away.

And I, on the way home, I came to Bratislava, like I mentioned before. Before that, you went through hell. You go with the trains. People went on top of the trains and on the roofs. And was so much commotion. Lots of people from all over came and went.

And so we came to a train station in Bratislava. This is Slovakia. I saw the station, Nadrazi, in Czech. And there we were sitting.

There I was already without those girls, I think, without those-- because those three sisters, when we were in Budapest, she found out they hung her father. He was a communist, or he wrote something. And they were hanging him in her hometown.

She was very upset, and they said they wanted-- they left. And I kind of was on my own, until I came to Bratislava there and sat by that station. The sun was shining. It was like spring.

And I was so weak. I thought, my God, I hope I don't die now. I want to see who is left, who-- I thought nobody is alive-- just me. I thought nobody can be alive. Just me.

And while I was sitting there, there was a pump of water, like straight ahead, quite a distance. And I saw a young guy with a Nazi uniform go towards that pump. And he had boots on, high boots, exactly like a Nazi.

But from the back, I don't know why. I thought it's my brother Jack. And I tried a few times to get up and go after him. I couldn't. I was so weak and that sun, evidently.

And then I look again, and I see here, I recognized his bottom of his head. And I got up on my knees, and I start going with all my strength I had on me. I start going.

And when I was a little closer, I said, Yankel. And he turned around. [CRYING] He turned around and looked at me,

and start towards me, not me towards him.

So he recognized you immediately.

My hair were a little grown at that time. I wasn't the same. I was very thin and weak. And my hair just start growing because they couldn't cut us while we were on the-- they walked with us.

On the march, yeah.

While we were on the march. So my hair start growing up a little. I wasn't that bare like he saw me in Auschwitz.

[SOBBING] And we both start crying, and we fell down. The water ran after us, under us.

And then I said, where is-- where is our father? He says, he's not with me. He died. I says, how can be sure? He's so strong and young. How can you be sure?

[SOBBING] He said, we were in the outdoors about five days before we were liberated. And he had something in his throat. And he choked, and he died. And they-- the next thought, he left him his strip for the guy next is in the next bed. And he said, he's in the back yard, he says. And I went out, and I saw his number on his big toe, he says, and uncovered him, and it was our father.

I says, how can it be? He says, that's how it is. I will take it, he says, from here.

Since then, I traveled with [NON-ENGLISH]. We traveled on and traveled on. He took care of me. He's the younger. He's younger than me, with 18 months. He always gave me his place in the window. And he traveled on top of the--

Like you said, I mean, he sat like on the luggage rack, or--

On top of the roof. Lots of people traveled on top of the roof of the trains, because there was no place. You wanted to come somewhere.

They had a shortage of trains too. There was--

Very shortage. And there was people everywhere. People everywhere.

Then I traveled. With him I arrived to Budapest already with Jack, I think.

And so did the two of you get back home?

Yes, we traveled together. We didn't let each other go.

I remember he met a little girl, a Romanian little girl. She wasn't Jewish. And they had a restaurant. And she liked Jack very much he was real skinny, with tall legs, with that uniform. He looked exactly like a young SS man.

So I remember, she took from the restaurant a plate with farina, and it was sugar and cinnamon on it. And she gave it to Jack. We were in another little room there. And he sat with his two legs on the window, with his leg down. And he asked me to sit in front of him with my legs over that window.

And he made, in that farina, a stripe. He says, half is yours, half is mine. I are from my half. He ate from his half.

How long did it take you to get home from after you and Jack met?

Forever. I think it was weeks. It was long weeks. If I want to tell you the truth, I couldn't tell you how long. I just don't know how long it took us. Maybe Jack remembers. I know it took us-- took us a long time.

And when we got home, we couldn't come through our side. We had to go through Romania. And we came to Romania. It called Sighet, which was Romanian-- Romanian and Hungarian then.

Well, that's not far from where my husband grew up.

Right.

It was-- well, I guess before the war it was Hungarian.

Sighet MĂ;ramarossziget?

Mm-hmm.

There where he was born?

Near there.

There was 12 kilometers from us. It's just we were on the Czech side. But when the Hungarian came in, you could go. It was open. Because Czech became Hungarian too, so you could go on the Romanian side. So me and Jack arrived to Sighet. And there we found our oldest brother living with his present wife.

As a matter of fact, what really happened, comes to think of it, we were so anxious, Jack and me, to get home, only the [NON-ENGLISH], the border separated Romanian side with our side. So instead, it should take us hours to go home. And we didn't know what's going on.

So we wanted to go through the water, which could have been drowned. So we took each other's hand, and we heard our sister from Belgium, is home. We found on the way home somebody from our town who said my sister is home. So we wanted to go home as fast as we could.

So we didn't took the regular channels. We want to cross the water, because on the water you cross, from the Romanian side to our side, you cross the water. But one water was very big, from the Romanian till the middle, and then our water was already nothing.

So we took each other's hand, and we start crossing the water till we were up here. And then shots rang out, and the Romanian soldiers shot after us. And we turned back. We almost drowned. And we turned back.

And he took us in to their-- that's how it was. They took us into the-- how do you call where the soldiers are? To their Kaserne? I don't know.

Well, like the police station, or the--

Not police station.

The military police.

They lived there. The soldiers lived there. They had a kitchen there. It was their station. It was Kaserne.

Headquarters or camp, yeah.

Like a headquarters. And they asked us to peel potatoes all that time. And they asked us what we were doing. And we told them, we're coming home, and we heard our sisters. And we're anxious to go home.

And they kept us there all day long. We peeled potatoes. But we ask, can we send out word to somebody. We heard our

brother is in Sighet. Can we send out word that we're here?

So they did send out word, and they checked with my brother, and my brother came with a horse and buggy and got us. And he just went right over the bridge, which used to be forbidden to go before. And he took us home. He lived there with-- at our home, at my father's, my mother's, from where they took us away, in the same home.

And your brother was living there.

My older brother, who came now for Russia about 12 years ago. And we came home on a Friday. It was just horrible. [CRYING] That Friday used to be the most beautiful thing. Just imagine, 11 children and two parents, set the table, put on the candle lights. 14 candles my mother used to light every Friday.

And there was nothing. It was so old. It seemed so cold.

Our backyard, there was with stones, like. And from the stones came out grass. Must have been already in May or June when we came home. It came out grass. And I went to look in the backyard. And I went to look at our fields where it used to grow at that time already. There was young onions, with the pickles, with the corn. That's all you had to go, is just break the corn and bring it in and cook.

And no father, no mother. [CRYING] Nobody. Jack.

Were you the only ones to come back from your whole family?

Me and Jack.

You and Jack, from the camps.

From the camps.

And then you had your older sister and your older brother.

My sister came from the-- from Switzerland.

Switzerland.

She was there. And my brother came. Everybody tried to get me home.

And your aunts and uncles, did anyone come back?

Nobody. Not their small children, not mine brothers and sisters I had. Just four of us. The four oldest was at this time.

We did come home, and we did find our sister there we didn't see for nine years, eight, nine years. She was there waiting. And it was very cold and empty, that homecoming.

Jack took out the harmonica, and he start playing. He always had a record player. He always had pigeons. When they took us away-- and it was a year before that they supposed to take away my mother and kids-- everybody ran and hiding. He was left on the attic with his pigeons. And then he came to get us when all was clear.

So he took out the-- and he start playing. And when he did that, I was very upset. I says, how can you? It's Friday. Where are the kids? [SOBBING] Where is everybody? How can you? I said.

He says, don't start with your business, he says. What was was. You have to start over. I had a real hard time. Somehow, the boys seemed to start over more easier. I don't know why.

And then my sister got sick at home. She couldn't take it. She couldn't. It's not the home she left neither nine years ago. So she picked herself up and went back to Czechoslovakia. And I was left home with Jack and with my older brother.

My older brother got married to this pleasant-- present wife what he has. Her name is Zita. We were at a wedding. And my sister took off.

She says, I can't take it here. It's not for me. She came from cities, a big to-do. She was a beautiful girl. And she says, I'll send for you as soon as I can. I says, I don't think I want to go away. Maybe somebody going to come back yet. She left, and I couldn't live there either no more.

How long were you at home before you left?

I was home a few months. My brother had his wife. And it started out weddings. People got married. It started out new life.

And I missed my sister. And he had his wife. And they didn't take me along to the weddings. If he took me along, I was crying as soon as music started playing. I couldn't stand it. And--

How did you feel there as a Jew when you came back?

I found the Russians there, and they were dancing every night, and it was never the same no more.

So the neighbors that you grow up with the, the Christian neighbors--

The Christians I grew up with, just so happen when I came home the first time, our dog who followed us to [NON-ENGLISH] was tied up in her driveway, which is cross-- here was the street to our house, and there was-- that he was tied up on a chain.

And I went and looked in in the fence, and I saw it's our dog. And I said, Harry. And he looked up. He tear himself off the chain. He jumped over and on me. He fell on me. And I start petting him. He licked me all over, like I never been away. He is the only one who was there. Really took with me.

I asked my brother what happened to him. He said, he died before he left. He came here yet.

It was young people who was left over. It was Russian.

In other words, it just wasn't the same people.

No. The neighbors were the same, but-- the neighbors were the same, but the army, and that whole thing. They were drinking [NON-ENGLISH]. And every night they danced in a different hall. And I just-- I don't know what-- maybe I was bitter. I couldn't get used to it.

And I just didn't want to go nowhere. In a wedding, he didn't want to take me, my brother. He says, I'm a crybaby. He was the oldest child.

And after a while, my sister wrote me. She says, please come. I'm waiting for you. I have a place for you. Please come and be with me. And I didn't want to leave Jack.

And where was your sister at this point?

She went to Prague, and then to Teplice-Sanov. Teplice-Sanov was about 70 kilometer from Prague. Can I have a drink?

Oh, sure.

And I said to Jack, let's go. Hersch, I says, Hersch's wife, let's-- he says, no, I don't want to go.

So I picked myself up with another friend, which I used to stay in Zaehlappel in Auschwitz. They now in New York. She's in Florida. She's a beautiful girl. And her three sisters came for Russia with her two brothers. They are in New York. In the Bronx they live.

And her and me and Jack took us with the horses and wagon to the train. And I went to my sister, to Teplice-Sanov there. It was very hard there. We found work in a factory who made stockings. My sister was there a little for a lady. And we worked there, and kind of tried to make a life out of ours. I didn't have shoes. I was barefooted. And I tried to work. You couldn't buy nothing.

And then, while we worked in that factory, I met my husband. He was sort of engaged with another girl. And on the streetcar, while we went home, he start being after me. He asked me to go to his brother in another city.

His brother came from the Czech army. He was a big man. He has a big house.

And my sister said, I'm not going to let her go away. She's a young girl. She came from a country. She came from Switzerland. She was beautiful with her long hair, with a nice figure. I was sort of thin and ugly, and without hair. I always wore a-- wherever I could find a babushka, I put here. I have on picture when I have a here a bow. And I was very after Jack should come out from [NON-ENGLISH] there for my brother.

And then we left Czechoslovakia. My husband-- we went first there, and I got married to him at his brother's place.

Is your a husband survivor also?

Yes.

Was he in a concentration camp--

Yes, he was in Mauthausen. He also was in, like, in the army, in the labor camps. But then they took him away also in the concentration. They also marched. And also a colored doctor. He had typhus in Mauthausen. And he brought him back to life. He's a survivor. He was liberated.

And we met in Czechoslovakia after the war, and we got married. And then we left Czechoslovakia to go to Germany, to go to Israel.

So when did you leave Czechoslovakia?

We left in 1946, I think. We left because my son-- no he was born in 1946. The end of '45, '46, something like that. And then we had to leave Czechoslovakia, because people went to Israel, and we wanted. We registered. And again, from there, we went all night. And I became pregnant right away without me knowing or anything. I got married in Litomerice. My husband's sister lived there.

And from there, we left and we came to Munich. There was, again, set up a big camp. Funkkaserne they used to call it, where that came survivors, and was there.

After that, we went to another camp. This was already a DP camps.

What sort of assistance did you get there? Were there Jewish agencies involved?

Yes, there was kitchens in those camp. Like in the Funkkaserne, you went-- you got, like, a bunk, a bed, and then big-- that's why-- you know what Kaserne? This is where the army has their headquarters. It was army headquarters, actually. That what it was. Funkkaserne they called it.

And they gave us meals there. And I was pregnant at that time already. When we came from Czechoslovakia to the Funkkaserne, I didn't feel too good. I was miserable. I was throwing up. And I-- and there was doctors who looked at me every so often.

And we were there for a while. And then they send us to different camps. We came to one camp, Heidenheim. My husband was there. Like a policeman.

And those who were, they got like a package a month, and there were some dry milk. There were some crackers, some army packages. And we were there for a while.

Then I heard that my sister, who also got married in Germany in kibbutz, we were-- when we heard she is there, we picked ourself up and went there. From Heidenheim, we went to-- I forgot the name of that-- it was a big camp, a DP camp. We went there, and we found her. She got married there.

And I have a block right here. We lived there for quite a bit after we got married.

So you lived in Germany how long after you got married, then?

After we got-- I got married in Czechoslovakia. My sister got married in Germany. And we found each other. After that-- I know now. For a minute, I just--

We were in a kibbutz. We found my sister in a kibbutz with her boyfriend. And she got married in that kibbutz. I forgot the name of the camp there. And she got married there. Probably going to come to me.

So you said kibbutz. They had like a kibbutz in Germany?

Yeah.

They had set up--

They had Kibbutz Gordonia. They had Kibbutz Shamir. They had--

So they were divided into different groups according to where they--

That was more radical. Like Hashomer was.

Hashomer Hatzair.

Right.

According--

--Hashomer. He was more--

I see, according to their political philosophy.

Right. When we came from our camp in Heidenheim, we came to my sister. And there she was in a kibbutz already. And it was Kibbutz Gordonia. We were with her there. And then that kibbutz moved to Landsberg, Landsberg am Lech. And we moved with her. And there I found my little cousin. His name is Yankel, too. They were named the same as my brother, after the same grandfather, after my father's father.

Unfortunately, he went with the kibbutz, and he got killed in Israel. I went to find out Israel how he got killed, and I found his place and everything. I found, in that kibbutz, I found the boys who told me how he was killed and everything.



So did you get to Israel, then, or your--

No, I never got to Israel. We came to Landsberg am Lech, and we were in that kibbutz. I marched every day with my little stomach. The stomach got bigger and bigger. And I worked in the kitchen. And we had-- we learned Hebrew. We were preparing for aliyah to Israel.

And our kibbutz, when my son was born November 2, 1946, he was about a few months old when our kibbutz made aliyah. And they didn't want to take me, because I had a little baby. They said that's illegal aliyah, it was called. Illegal aliyah.

Yeah it was--

Illegal.

--illegal, yeah.

Right. They went on black. So with babies, they didn't want to take nobody. So I was left there. So I lived there with my husband.

And while we were there, we found out that my husband's uncle is looking for survivors, his brother's children or somebody. And we found this out through the UNRRA, through the Jewish organization. And they asked us to register, and we registered.

And our transport, our aliyah arrived to Israel. Not to Israel. They arrived to--

Cyprus?

Cyprus. They arrived to Cyprus. And they had it very, very rough there.

As a matter of fact, one came back, and they said, don't you ever go there. It's terrible, especially with a baby. And this time I didn't want to go no more to Israel, since the baby. And I thought, I had enough already.

And since we got in touch with our uncle, he wrote us. He send us a package, some clothes. And he said, we want you here, and we love to have you. And you're my brother's son, and I have nobody here. And we're going to make you papers. And please don't go.

And my husband said, it can't be. I says, I'm not going to Israel. I want to go to America. My mother had a son from America. And I always sang that with her. And what she said in that song, I says, I have to see America. Since I lived through it, I'm not going to go--

From America, I says, my mother said, America, this land is frei. America, the land of free. Is the whole world [NON-ENGLISH], is the whole world--

A pleasure. Or a--

Gives--

--gives the whole world happiness.

Yeah.

Yeah.

I remember that song so many years like today. And I said to my husband, I'm not going to Israel. If America is so free,

like my mother said, I always can go to Israel, I says. If we have a chance, I want to go to America.

So we began to live privately. And it went by, '46. It was '49 already until Uncle Joe made out the papers, until we our quota. The Czech quota wasn't so good. We registered under the Czech quota.

And we were living there. And my husband worked for the UNRRA. He was the driver for the American ladies and gentlemen who went in camp, from DP camp to DP camp, to see and to set up, and to bring in more people. And he drove a little car. And they liked him very much. He was the driver for them, for the UNRRA people.

Were the Jewish organizations active? Like HIAS--

HIAS were very active.

And they worked together with the United Nations, with UMRA?

UNRRA, yeah. U-N-R. Is that what it was? United Nations?

Right. Relief Works Agency, I think it's. U-N-R-W-A. Yeah.

UNRRA. So then he already, when he start driving for the American people, who were really American when my baby was born. Mrs. Nay was her name, the lady he used to drive around with a man. She was an elderly woman, American lady. When the baby was born, she brought me two dozen of diapers. It was American diapers. And they liked her very much. And I says, I want to go to America. I always have time to go to Israel.

But I was missing the whole kibbutz. My children, mine-- I was missing them so. But every day came back news that they are dead, they're falling, they're-- that they're fighting there.

So finally it came, our quota. And they took us to Bremerhaven to wait our coming to America. But we always was laid off. And the day they took us to go to America, to the ship, somebody else on our name left to America, and they brought us back. And we was there three more months in Bremerhaven. Somebody to investigate.

No, this was an Augsburg. In Augsburg. When we were in Bremerhaven, it was already OK. When we arrived to Augsburg to go, somebody left on our name, and they wouldn't let us go. Something.

And then my husband left me there in Augsburg, and left back to Landsberg to find out what happened. So they told him somebody left on our name. And we were three more months there.

And about that time, when finally we could go, everything was taken care of, we arrived to Bremerhaven. And you went through doctors, and they disinfected. You were again-- and by that time, [NON-ENGLISH] was already about two years, two and a half years. And I was pregnant with the second one.

And while the doctor examined me, he found out I was pregnant. And he didn't let me go with the ship. So again, our transport went away, and we were again held back in Bremerhaven. We went through hell to come here. We were so unlucky.

So then they held us up and said that we have to go by plane. And whenever a plane is going to be available, we're going to go. So two or three times we went to the plane in Hamburg and all over. And by the time it came our, we went to the door to the plane, the plane was full. We were cut off. And again we was back.

But finally came the day that we did come by plane. Uncle Joe waited for us two weeks. We never arrived because, like I said, we always were held back. They were caught up, and he got telegrams, and the Jewish Welfare here that--

To come and get you, and you were not there.

We are on the plane, and we never arrived. He waited for us in New York. So when we arrived, finally, to Cleveland-- we came to New York. It was very hot. It was in June. And [NON-ENGLISH], my little boy, went in a sweater up to here, with a neck, and it was about 90 degrees. And he was bad and crying, and I was with my big stomach with my second. And they told us that a train from New York to Cleveland takes two days and a night.

And I lay down there under on a bench. And I said, if I never go another place, another step, I says, I'm going to lay on that bench until you give me something to go to Cleveland, that I can't lie down. I can't sit no more. I was in mine eighth month already. I was real big and tired, and worn out, and hot.

And I had one lemon who kept me alive. They took it away from me at-- when you came through customs. They ask for fruit. Well, I says, that's all I have is a lemon. They said they have to take it away. I says, take away everything, because I didn't feel good. And that lemon.

This, when they took away the lemon, it was just as bad as when they cut the first time my hair. I says, please leave my-- they said, we can't. It's not allowed. They explained us in Yiddish.

And now I know that fruit, you can't transport from--

Right, right.

It was a real big, beautiful lemon. Was cut in two.

So they took away the lemon. And we were-- and when I cried, and I said, I can't go two nights in a day, I says, sitting up in a train. I can't make it, I says. I'm worn out. Was very hard. So took us somebody from the Jewish Welfare. And they said they're going to try to do something for us.

In the meanwhile, they took us in. And it was air conditioned. I didn't never know of an air conditioning. They took us in in a cool room. And we sat there all day. And a lady took us. She bought us ice cream, and a roll, a sandwich. And it was like a tent. And we ate that.

And she said, not understand. We'll go inside. So you can go in.

And we had that, and we were waiting in that room. And finally they came, and they said that they called Cleveland, and Uncle Joe said they should send us by a train. But I'm going to have a sleeping car, that I'll be able to sleep.

So we waited there in New York all day. And then finally, at night, she went on the train. And I did have a bed. I was in the bottom. My husband, my little boy on top. And I kept looking out all night. The train went. And it reminded me of another train at that time.

And I thought, gee, I can't believe. Is that really a miracle?

And we saw buggies. The buggies were so ugly in New York. And they had those things over. And lots of garbage cans. I couldn't get over those garbage cans. I didn't know what it was. And those buggies with those-- with that thin thing over them, with big wheels.

In Europe, the buggies were like little autos, low, and it had a thing over, and wheels, especially in Germany. It was very-- and in the front it had like a plastic, its own. And it came. Mine boy had a beautiful little wagon already in Germany. And he was such a--

And then I couldn't figure out the garbage cans. And people were running all over. Before, I never saw such a-- so many people.

And then they told us that-- we finally went on the train, and lie down. I looked out. And we did go a long time with that train from New York to Cleveland. It looked like weeks.

I slept. I was up. And I thought to myself, gee, I taste already I'm here. They do have trains with beds. What are different, I thought to myself, from one train to the next, from the one who took us to Auschwitz, the way my mother laid there with her little boy, and now I'm here with a boy. [SOBBING] Oh, if my mother only could see me, her little girl pregnant with a little boy. [CRYING]

So when we arrive to Cleveland, we went up. Uncle Joe and his wife waited for us on another station. And we went off somewhere on the West Side. We heard Cleveland. We went off. And we came down, and nobody waited for us.

And I said to mine husband, oh my God, maybe your uncle changed his mind. What are they going to do with us? You still had that fear in you that maybe nobody wants you.

And this was when? This was 1949?

1949. And my husband says, you know what? We have the address. They used to live in Mayfield Heights, right off of Coventry, a beautiful big stone-- right off of Coventry there, on the right-hand side.

And I says, don't-- I don't want to go. I want to wait for your uncle. He must be-- he told us to come, and he sent \$50, and now he says he doesn't wait for us, and maybe he doesn't want us anymore. And he says, no matter what, we're going to go to his home and see what happens.

So we did take a taxi. And we had \$50, what the Jewish Welfare gave us. And we arrived there. And we rang the doorbell. It had a big stone porch. And we rang in the front door. You didn't know you have to go the side door.

And [NON-ENGLISH], by that time, my little boy was a wild child. And he was tired too to make a journeys. Months it took us. And we rang the doorbell, and a Black lady answered the door.

And Melvin says, oh my God, my uncle has married a Schvartze. Maybe that's why he didn't wait for us.

In the meanwhile, it was their maid, Rosalie. Nice, beautiful, God bless her if she's still alive. And Rosalie opened the door. And he says, my God, mine uncle married a colored lady, he says. And I says, don't jump the guns. Let's see what's going to happen.

And we says, Joe Simon, Elsie Simon? And she says, but the train. You, Germany? And she said. And we says, yeah. And Melvin looked like his uncle, my husband, tall, and he looked a lot like his uncle. And she let us in.

She figured out what had happened.

She let us in, and she asked us to sit down, by hand, everything. And [NON-ENGLISH] start running around. And I kept him he shouldn't move in a strange home. And the phone rang, and this was Uncle Joe calling home to see if maybe we're home.

And I heard the way she said it, and was laughing, that we are there. It didn't take long. Uncle Joe walked in, and he smiles. He says, [NON-ENGLISH] wanted to show me they're smarter than I am, arrive by themselves. Even that pleasure, he says you couldn't give me. I waited for you in New York, he says-- and he did wait. The Jewish Welfare told us he waited in New York for us for two weeks, and we never came, because they kept postponing. And then he waited in Cleveland, and we went off on another station.

But you finally had your homecoming.

Finally I got.

Well--

To Uncle Joe's home.

Julia, before we finish the interview, I would like to ask you. You've told us, shared with us all of your experience. Looking back on this, two things I'd like to ask you. Is there any way in which your Holocaust experiences affect you now, do you feel? And what, if anything would you want to say to other people? Is there any message you might want to give to people who will-- might be listening to your tape sometime in the future?

(SOBBING) Don't let it happen again. Fight. Die in your home. Don't go. Die right there where you were. Don't go through what we went through. It doesn't pay, life.

Millions died who could have died a couple of years before who didn't have to go through what we went through and see what we saw. It lives on, no matter what. We try to forget, we try to go about our ways. The only thing I hope, it never happens again. And it never happens to my grandchildren or mine children.

If you have to fight for a thing like this-- you didn't commit no crime, you never did anything bad, those little children, those little babies who were innocent as newborn babies are, they were slaughtered. They were gassed. They were shattered. And mothers had to see it. I couldn't bear to see it. The only thing I don't want to see it is, again, at my children, or to experience.

If it had to have, first of all, they should fight. It shouldn't happen again. Take action. Try to work it out, talk about it. Don't wait like we waited. They talked about it for months, I remember.

My father didn't want that we should hear that this is coming. Nobody wanted to believe it. It wouldn't happen in this small town. We didn't do anything. It wouldn't happen here. It happened, and it could happen again--

--if you let it go.

Thank you very much for sharing this with us. I know that it was not easy for you, but you've made a tremendous contribution, and it's very much appreciated.

Thank you. I'm glad people can do what they're doing in order it shouldn't happen again, and hopefully it won't.

Right. I'm Bernice Harel. Our Holocaust survivor today has been Julia Simon. This project has been sponsored by Cleveland Section, National Council of Jewish Women.