

This is Tape 3 of the interview with Milton Steinbock, Holocaust survivor, being conducted by Sylvia Abrams. Mr. Steinbock, on the second tape, you discussed a lot about what happened at the time of the German occupation.

Right.

We heard about what happened to your family and to you in the town and how the Germans organized the occupation. I'd like you to give us a quick overview of, after 1939, each of the places you were and how long you were in each particular location. Then we'll go back and fill in a little more.

All right. I was taken to Deblin labor camp in 1940. From 1940, I stayed there till 1944 June. From June 1944, I went to Czestochowa to work in a steel mill. I worked by the hot steel. I worked night shift. It was no picnic.

Then from there, the Russian army came close to Czestochowa, so they took us out January the 14th. The 15th, we came to Buchenwald. And Buchenwald, I stayed overnight and they shipped me to another concentration camp that's called Schellenberg.

In Schellenberg, luckily, there was typhus going on when we came with the train. So they wouldn't take us in in the place. So they left us outside the camp. It never got better. So we stayed there, maybe, a week, and they shipped us back to Buchenwald.

Then I stayed another few days. I didn't want to go no place more and would stay in Buchenwald, but it didn't help. They had all kind of police there. They had Ukrainian, Russian, French, Italian, all kind of nationalities.

They were searching for you, you know. You couldn't hide. They packed me in a train and I went back. From there, I went to Flossenbug, 40 kilometers from Leipzig.

In Leipzig, there was a torture. You could only survive-- if you saw the movie on TV, The Odessa Files, you could only survive there. If you hold out a week, you were a hero.

Because day and night, they dig their trenches to throw in those corpses. They had no crematorium there. But huge fields, summer, winter, fall, spring, that's what they were doing. Luck was a little bit with me, and I came out of it. If I have a chance, I'll tell you how.

From there, when I came out of it, they shipped me. I knew I was going to die anyway, so I accept it. So they shipped me to go back to Buchenwald. And on the road, the Americans were already occupying certain parts of Germany. So they turned me around and shipped me to Dachau.

In Dachau, we were over there about four days. Then they took us out to be liquidated. So from Dachau to a place, Mittenwald, it's about, I don't know if it's 70 kilometers, not even 70 kilometers. It took us a week to reach the distance.

But we didn't reach Mittenwald. We came far away, when the American army cut through and they liberated us, 1945 on April the 30th, 2 o'clock. We were liberated on the train.

You were liberated on the train?

Yes. On the train, we were loaded there, maybe, by 8,000 prisoners. But I don't know if a thousand survived. Because each move we did, we were already exhausted and everything.

Each move we did, overnight, they opened the car trains, and we had to pull out all the dead ones. We were packed in 150 to 170 in a train. By liberation, there wasn't even 20 in our boxcar. Some of them were 10, some of them were 15, some of them were 12, some of them were even 2.

By each station, they'd throw it out. Whatever they did with them, I don't know. We were going on until the Americans

liberated us.

You were in so many different places. I'm going to go back, and what I'm going to ask you is so that we get a little bit about each place, to ask you a few things about each one. Let's start with the Deblin labor camp, because you were there the longest.

Well, in Deblin labor camp, I have to tell you, there was a lot of things going on. There was Germans that were bribed. You could bribe them.

You could, I mean, smuggle in things to eat, clothes. There was even a fact that the girls in the camp wore a manicure on their nails. There was no camp that somebody could tell you that.

In that labor camp, I'm not going to tell you how I came in. I came in also because I took a chance by registering. I was the first Jew to be registered.

My number was 49. That remained with me until I left Deblin. They gave me on the pocket and it was 49. There was 48 Poles, and I was 49. I was the first Jew to be registered.

I went in. Right away, I got a group of painters. I caught the language so fast, the German language, that reading and writing, you know, it took me not even two months.

So you were employed as a painter in the camp?

Yes, I was employed to a camp [INAUDIBLE].

Was there anyone there, like, were any of your family or any friends of yours in this camp?

Yes. There was an uncle I had there. He didn't survive.

I had a lot of friends. Some of them survived. I have one friend in Israel. He lives in Israel. The rest of them from my family were in different camps.

What I wanted to find out here, because in the last tape we had talked a lot about how you were being caught for the various labor gangs while you were still at home and being able to return to your family at night. What happened, briefly, to your family when you went into the Deblin labor camp?

Then they organized the ghetto. We had to give up our section, the nicest section in the city, and move in in a corner, like in a slum. They took away the lights. They took away the water from you. For the whole ghetto, they let you about three-- no, two wells, you should go and take water from it.

There was no sign that you can survive there in the ghetto. But you know what a Judenrat is?

Yes.

All right. The Judenrat there were very fine people, I would say, all the elders. Because every time they took out, they found something wrong with them.

So the Judenrat in Deblin tried to act for the people, the Jews of the town?

Right. They tried. It wasn't like in other towns. They tried to organize some food for the poors and give them. But it didn't help.

They made a kitchen. They bribed the Germans. Because they bribed the Germans and somebody squealed from the Poles, they took the German away and they brought in another one. The other one, then, later came.

He took revenge, not in other Jews, but in that alteste from the Judenrat. He took him out, sent him to a camp where he died. There was about five Judenrat alteste during the time that we were in the ghetto.

Which meant that they wouldn't cooperate with the Germans, which is why they were being changed so often?

They tried to cooperate, but they tried to help the Jews.

So they were changed very often?

Right. The Germans didn't want them to do that. They tried to help, desperately. They tried. But they told the Jews, whatever you can get or whatever you do, you have to give up power to us that we could help other ones.

So the ghetto was organized. You were in it from the middle of 1939 to 1940 when you were--

No, the ghetto was organized in 1940.

But during 1940 was when you were taken to the Deblin labor camp, then?

Yes. No, first I went to Pulawy. First I went to Pulawy, and I stayed in Pulawy. I'm not going to talk about the whole thing in Pulawy.

But in Pulawy, there they sent you from the Judenaltestes. They sent to Pulawy to be tortured to death. The alteste there from Pulawy, his name was Brandt, like the foreign minister from Germany, that same spelling. He was a heavy guy.

He wouldn't talk to a Jew with his face, like I'm talking to you. When he talked to you or to me, he turned his back. You talked the way he talked. You understand?

Yes.

He wouldn't look a Jew in the eyes. So anyways, over there I was sent because I was a painter, and the Germans are preparing to attack Russia. So they made it hospitals. They didn't know if the Russians would fight back, and they needed a lot of casualties. But they didn't use that place. But that place had to be fixed up, you should be able to put in German casualties.

From Pulawy, I came back. Right away, I had to register for work. So I registered in the office. But they choose your place. You couldn't go wherever you wanted.

So they sent me to the railroad station. They were building new depots. They were building a lot of depots. It was torture there.

The only thing you saw is Lithuanians, and Ukrainians, and Latvians, and Bulgarians, and all kinds of nationalities. They were having the guns. You see, there was a lot of casualties from those nations, too. I wouldn't deny that. But the difference was they were having the guns, and we didn't have nothing.

When you were sent here, what happened to your family, then?

My family was still in ghetto until they started to liquidate the ghetto. 1942, they took away my mother and two brothers, the younger ones.

Did you hear about this after the war?

No.

You knew because of being in the labor camp?

I used to have a sign, came in every time from work in ghetto. I had a paper. So when I came in that day, we used to stop a lot of times. If we drove by, I used to jump down from the truck.

Because the Germans used to go in, there used to be, like, a coffee shop for them allowed. They used to stay an hour. It wasn't far from the ghetto. I used to run in the back end and say hello to my family.

So one day as I run down from the truck, and I knew they will still be there at least a half hour, I came in in the house. On the way, I saw so quiet. You couldn't see a person in the ghetto.

So I said to my mother, I smell something no good. She says, what do you mean? I said to her, I would like to stay. I would like not to go back and go with you.

Because we didn't expect that they will you know gas all the Jews for no reason. We thought, OK, it's a war. There's casualties. Someone dies, someone lives.

But my mother said, look, my son. I made one mistake. Remember? You want to run away to Russia? This time I wouldn't let you stay with me. You go back to work. Maybe by some miracle, maybe by something, maybe somebody will survive.

So I walked out. I cried. Went back to work.

At night, we found out in camp, so before the nightfall, I had my paper, so I run. I came in in the ghetto. There was nothing there.

As I'm going back to that Brandt, he was in charge over that liquidation from the ghetto. The first, they liquidated four times our ghetto. The first time they took out the children, the older woman, older men, the sick ones. They pushed them in the cars.

But they didn't have the cars yet, so they pushed them in in a dump. How do I know? I was there. They pushed them in in a dump, and the Ukrainians guarded them with machine guns.

So when I came in the ghetto and I asked the rest of the people what happened, they said they still by the train, maybe. Maybe they are there. So I thought with that paper, that whatever it was, that I can save my family, my mother.

So I run. I didn't run through the roads, but I run to the side, and I came there. There are so many SS, and so many, you know, and I walked right into him with that paper, like this.

He said, what do you want? I said I would like to speak to the guy who is in charge. He was waiting for the trains to come.

I saw him from far away. He was holding his head like this and listening to a record or something. I don't know.

All of a sudden his telephone in the car rang. As he turned to me, take a look who I am, you know? Either he saw me, or you know, I don't know if he remembered me.

Like I said, he wouldn't look to a Jew in the face. This was my luck, because he didn't look a Jew in the face. Because I holded my paper. He didn't say, you know, what do you want or something like that.

The phone rang. He turned, pick up that phone, and he started to talk, and I walked away with that paper on my own. Because I saw that if he turns around, he'll say to the SS throw him right there on that garbage.

So I walked by. The other SS said to me what happened? I said he told me to go back to work. So I went.

Listen, until they found out what he said or what he didn't say, I was already back in the ghetto. I stayed overnight. In the morning, I went back to my work.

In the labor camp?

This was in the labor camp.

And that was the last you saw of your family, that they were there?

That was the last I saw my mother and the two brothers.

Did you ever find out where they went?

Yes. We sent little letters with the railroad workers that they work on the railroad. They said they came to a place that's called Sobibor. They wouldn't let us in.

They wouldn't let in the workers because the train, they had to unhook the machine, like, a half a mile before that. This was a death camp. They gassed them there.

So anyways, from there, this was 1942, May the 6th they took away my mother. Around September 1942, they took my father and another brother, the last brother, and one sister.

Those that they are here, some of them were in a different camp. They were unloading and loading coal by the railroad station. Conditions were bad. The camp got sick. You couldn't get in fresh Jews because they died by the dozens every day.

So they started, they liquidated them. I also-- one brother, you know, bring him over on my side, where I was in that camp-- no way.

So you're the only one of all the family--

That's right.

--who survived.

Because this one with that thing, with that on her head had that little boy in here. On account of because she had a boy, she couldn't get in and out of So all the sisters stayed together.

Mhm.

You understand?

Yes.

So that's why they were liquidated. They were taken from that camp to a place that's called Poniatowa. Over there, they brought the rest from the Warsaw ghetto already. They stayed over a year in that camp. I don't know what, they worked, what they did.

Then when they brought the rest from the Warsaw ghetto uprising, they all, you know, finished them off there.

So after the war, you heard where--

Right, by people that they ran away or they survived, like me. That's how I found out.

Let's go now to the conditions in the labor camp. Tell me something about the food rations and about the camp authorities.

In the beginning when the army had us, like the air force had us in that camp in Deblin, we had a half ration as a soldier got. Understand? Whatever the soldier got, we had a half. Like, the soldier had a half a bread, we had a quarter.

The soldier had so much jelly, we had a quarter of it. So much margarine, we had a quarter of it, anything we had. We had to have our own clothes.

Were you issued a uniform, a prison uniform?

No uniforms, you had civilian clothes.

And just the number that you mentioned was stitched on it?

But as I worked as a painter, from those that they watched me, I got old working clothes. German working clothes, which I had to rip off the swastika, and I wore it. This helped me a lot between the Germans because a lot of times they used to tell each other that the Jews are so and so and the Jews are this. I just listened, you know, and I went away from it.

Then nobody knew, because I shaved myself clean, had a haircut, tried to wash myself. There was a shower which I went in. I worked for the commandant from the camp, so I had a little privilege.

So because of the fact that you were a painter, you got to keep yourself cleaner because you had to clean up the materials and so on.

No, I didn't clean there the materials. The materials I cleaned on the job. But because I slept there in the camp, you know, there was bunks, one two, three, four. You understand?

So they gave me a bunk by a window. I tried to keep-- it was impossible to keep yourself clean. But every night when I came home, I went into the shower, took a shower.

And shaving, I didn't shave myself in the barracks. But I used to go to the shop where I was sent out for work because I knew how much I had to do this day. So I knew it, I'll do it, even if I'll shave myself.

So the German looked away. The German who sent me to work, he looked away.

The various camp authorities, how did they treat / you said the Germans looked away when you cleaned up.

Depends on certain people, you see, by the Germans was a law, one for all and all for one. You understand? If somebody did something wrong, they used to take out so many people and kill them on the spot.

There was one fact that I remember. That they were working on a loading in a barn, in, like, a garage. They were stacking up straw and the hay.

A German soldier, he was rushing to go for lunch. He took a cigarette, and he threw it, you know? It took overnight until that fire went up.

When those people were in the barracks already, the fire came out, and it started to burn. The whole barn burned down. So they came and they took out all those people and the rest of them out. There were about 40 people that they were working, so they took out 80.

So depends how they count it. They just counted you, pushed away one, two, you know. That's how they took it.

Depends who fall in their eyes.

The rules were strict. But like I said before, you knew you were going to die. So may as well do whatever you wanted.

What were the interactions with the other prisoners?

We could talk at night. In fact, we used to make a song, used to sing quietly our songs. It happened one time in Yom Kippur that we started to daven, you know, like, Kol Nidre.

So there was a major. He was living right across in a little villa on top. The voice from us was we lost ourselves a little bit. We started to cry and pray.

So right away, he rushed all the Germans with the guns. He came in. He said that we have a secret radio, that we give secrets to the Russians.

They searched. There was no radio. So we went out of it.

Were there other times like that? You said you knew when the holidays were and people tried to pray from memory?

Yes. There were other times. Some of them had to pray. But you had to hide it because once a week used to come in a commission from the SS. They searched and see how we live, the conditions.

One time they went in and they opened a suitcase. There was a passport from Czechoslovakia. There was a Czech Jew, and in his passport, he had not those kronen, but Czechoslovakian kronen. He had 150 of it.

So they opened, they saw money. A Jew was not allowed to have money. This was forbidden right from the first day. So when they found the money, they sent for him.

They sent for him. They brought him from work. The alteste from the Germans asked him where did you get the money. He said he brought it as a souvenir from Czechoslovakia.

He said to him do you know that Jews are not allowed to have money? He said, well, I'm sorry. I'll throw it away. I didn't know that, this and that. OK. You can go.

He opened the door, and he pulled out his gun, [CLICKS TONGUE] bang. He was laying for 24 hours. They wouldn't take him away. Right away, they made a big sign. I was guilty because I worked against the German government and lay down on his body.

There was times that there was a cemetery in the back of that camp, over 100 people there for all kinds of things. But still, life had to go on.

Now this camp, Deblin, was a camp that was both Jews and non-Jews, you said were in the camp. There were Poles there as well?

There were Poles, too. But they didn't stay. They had the kitchen only. They didn't sleep there.

They were allowed to return to their homes?

Right. After work, but they came for the meals, three meals, breakfast, lunch, and supper. But right across from us there was a big Russian camp, free, under the sky, just under barbed wire. That's all and four towers.

They had it worse than we had it. As a Jew, I can say that. They had it worse.

But anyways, I'll go back to that's how Deblin was liquidated, four times.

The town?

The town, clean of Jews. Then I remained in camp until they shipped me to Czestochowa.

You were in Deblin, you said in that camp three years till 1944.

Right.

Why were you then shipped to Czestochowa?

Because the Russians came 60 kilometers from Deblin. They came into Lublin, like. They occupied Lublin. So the German government took us out.

Did you have any inkling then that the Germans were going to lose the war?

Yes. The Germans used to tell me. You know, they didn't know if they were talking to a Jew. They told me right away that we are lost. But we have no other alternative. We have to fight to the last.

By Czestochowa, I came in. I worked in that hot steel. From there, I was from--

At Czestochowa, when you worked in the hot steel, were you anywhere near the Czestochowa ghetto?

There was no ghetto at that time.

The ghetto had already been liquidated there.

They started from the German border, going towards the east. So each city was swept away.

Were there people from other towns in Czestochowa when you were working--

Oh, yes. There were from Krakow, from L<sup>3</sup>dz, from all kind of cities.

Was it only Jews who were working there?

Yes.

Was that the first time you were working with only Jews?

Yes. But on the jobs, there were shifts, Poles, too.

I see.

You know, they came. They worked their shifts. So you could talk to them.

Did you have any idea what was going on on the outside, then?

Yes. They came. The Poles had secret radios, like the underground. They used to tell you a lot of times. But I'm telling you, you couldn't run. Even if you want to take a chance, you couldn't.

Let's talk about that a little bit. Did anyone make any plans to try to get away?

They did.



And what happened? In Deblin alone--

Tell what happened when--

In Deblin alone, a group that served before in the Polish army, they knew how to hold guns. So one day when the Germans were for lunch, they sneaked behind a plane. They pulled out two boxes of ammunition. They pulled out two machine guns. And they run.

But they came to a forest, you have to eat. The minute they went out from the forest to organize some food, the farmer used to say-- you know, they didn't have no choice. He used to give them something.

He used to say tomorrow, I'll have more. Or if you'll come the next day, I'll have more. I'll have kielbasa. I'll have this.

They knew they might be trapped, but they took a chance. When they came, they were already surrounded by a German army. you. Use out your ammunition, and that's it. They were all killed.

So when you were in the Deblin labor camp, people heard about this, the fact that there had been this attempt to escape.

Sure. I was laying that time with my leg right in the thing.

You told me you broke your leg. Tell me the story about what happened with the leg.

We were camouflaging the largest hangar, you know, that the Germans used to look over the planes before they came from a flight to bomb Russia. After they came, they used to look them over, check them over, and be prepared to go again. So we were camouflaging in 1943 about three weeks before Christmas. I don't remember exactly the date was.

In the morning, it was kind of cloudy. It wasn't that cold. But later on, it started to get freezing. I was spraying with a big sprayer. I was on the roof, between the skylights.

There the German, you know, he got cold. He wanted to go a little earlier for lunch. So he started go faster. We didn't do nothing today. I said the gun wouldn't go.

So he tried it. It didn't go. So he got mad.

I was on top on the ladder. Just for fun, he just kicked it. Everything was a sheet of ice. There was no place where to grab, even on the glass.

I slipped from one skylight in the other, broke through the skylight down to the concrete. But my luck-- like I said, there was always a little luck-- that I hit the cables, electric cables, one cable on the other, one on the other, one on the other, one on the other, until I came down.

So that slowed your fall?

Right. So the only thing I was cut a little bit from the glass. I broke my leg. When I broke my leg, I was unconscious.

So the German that I worked for him, brought a horse and a wagon, put me on the wagon, put me to camp, throw me in the camp. Didn't have a penny. I lived through. I was there four months.

They brought in other Jews that one broke a leg, one broke an arm. They had money. They were fixed up. But they didn't survive.

So the camp had an infirmary, a hospital?

It wasn't exactly a hospital, because a Jew was not allowed to be sick more than 48 hours. So it was like a little room.

There was a Jewish doctor. His name was Kestenberg.

He was all kind of doctor. He made abortions by the Jewish woman. He did everything.

You were there four months and the leg healed without any special medical attention?

Nothing. When I came in, my feet were swollen bigger than-- what am I going to tell you? Who knows? Like a big watermelon, and that's how I was laying.

The bad part of it was that my back, I couldn't lay on the wood. I couldn't lay. It got so irritated, even if I wanted to turn over, I couldn't, not left and not right. I laid there until the swelling went away. Then I started to work.

So when you have spoken about painting, you weren't just painting in buildings. You were painting the airplanes?

No airplanes.

You said you were spraying camouflage. What? On the roofs, we were camouflaging. They were afraid the Russians will come and bomb.

So you were spraying the roofs of--

Of the hangars.

--of the hangars for the airplanes?

The sidewalks, the landing fields where the planes landed. We made it in four colors. We made it gray, beige, light green, and what was the third color, like a sand color, a little light sand. That was the work.

But most of it, I did painting. But when they needed me for concrete or for other things, I did everything.

I see.

It wasn't there you should stay. The only four months that I didn't work, when I was laying on my broken-- you know, with my broken leg. From there, Czestochowa was there.

From Czestochowa, I have to go fast. Because from Czestochowa, they took me out. I went to Buchenwald.

Let's talk a little bit about Buchenwald and what happened in the camps. Tell me a little bit about your arrival in the camp. Do you remember anything about the daily routine in the--

Sure. I arrived the 15th in the middle of the night. The frost was bitter.

Did you know where you were going?

We knew. We saw the sign, Buchenwald. Arbeit-- it was the sign right by the camp that says Buchenwald Arbeit macht Frei.

Did you know what a camp like that was, what Buchenwald was?

No. We heard of it once in a while. But we didn't know.

Did you think it was going to be like Lublin, like the other kinds of labor camps?

I knew it wouldn't be.

You knew it was going to be a different kind of--

Sure. We knew it's a death camp. So we had to undress. Jump in-- there was a pool bigger than this room, oh, five times. They had some kind of disinfection, some kind of liquid that you had a cut or anything, it burned through right your skin. I mean, it burned like acid.

We jumped in. If you didn't close like this, just the eyes alone, but with your hands like this, your eyes would burn terrible. So if anybody didn't jump in, put their head down below that liquid, bang, zoom, right away, with a pole or something.

So from there, you run out. You run in under a cold ice water shower. A lot of them didn't survive. Didn't make it to the shower. A lot of them didn't make it from the shower to the clothing.

Then so you are a small man, they throw you a big pair of pants, a big, large jacket, a big hat. Who knows what kind of hat from some kind of country, from an army camp or something, then wooden shoes from Holland.

So I got a big one. So at night, you weren't allowed. But you ripped a piece of cover, from the cover. But if somebody caught you, you were shot right on the spot.

The food, there was no food. There was nothing. The Germans didn't have that time.

Because this was toward the end of the war?

Sure, it was in 1945. You know that.

Was there any daily routine at this point or not?

You had to go out and stay on appell. Appell means you stayed until they counted you. It took hours.

Then when the snow was so big, I know particularly our group, when we came, we had to get undressed and run in the snow naked, barefoot and naked, and rub you with the snow. I rubbed myself with the snow, run around the building about 12 or 15 times until they saw that steam is already steaming from you. They let you in.

We went out, like, 200 men. Only maybe 30 or 40 came back. The rest of them fell in the snow.

Then you got dressed and you picked up the dead ones, throw them on a wagon, and through the crematorium. Right to the crematorium, throw them in. The worst part, you were used to it every day, like, for a while.

But the shooting, when you throw in a body, the inside explodes somehow. I don't know why. That was the routine. At night, the same thing, and a thin little slice of bread, very little.

Then a little soup once a day, water. They had all kind of things. They had a theater. They had everything, but not for us, only for the Germans and for the police.

How many people do you think were in the camp when you were there? Do you remember?

Oh, when I came the first time, must have been at least, I would say, 30,000, maybe more. When I came back the second time, there must have been a quarter of a million, maybe. Because the first time I could still go in in my bunk.

But the second time, we stood. One stood on the other. You were packed in. It was hot.

How many people were in a barracks, then?

A couple hundred, close to 800 or 700, maybe more.

You mentioned when you were in the labor camp how people tried to remember the holidays and do things from memory. When you were in Buchenwald, was there any--

No, this disappeared right away. Because we were mixed out already with all kinds of nationalities. We weren't separate. We were thrown in and mixed out in groups.

But the only thing when I came to that camp, Flossenburg, it was a death camp, where they digged and they tortured you. I tried every day to jump in a different group and try it out if maybe it's a little easier. Maybe you can get something. Maybe you can organize something, which I found.

One day, I found by the German kitchen SS where they throw the garbage, but right away they poured gasoline and throw a match. But anyways, I went in. Every five minutes, you should excuse me, I had to go to the bathroom.

The German used to say, why do you have to go so much to the bathroom? You don't eat. You don't do nothing. You have to go to the bathroom.

I said, I have a weak stomach. What can I do? All right. He let me go. He went with a gun, but he didn't go close to that latrine, because it was only a pole made, and a little coverage, like, I would say that high, just the bottom part to cover you.

Meanwhile, I stick my hands, whatever I grabbed.

In the garbage?

In the garbage, potato peeling, cabbage peeling, beet peeling, any kind of peeling. There were already-- you should excuse me-- with human things. I opened my shirt, my shirt, my jacket, and packed around, all around.

When I came home at night, we didn't have no barracks. We slept outside.

In Flossenburg, people slept outside?

Outside. There was no barracks. Only the SS slept in barracks. They watched out by towers with electric.

We slept in the rain, in the snow. People fell like flies. I talk to my friends, you know, just a second. Here they go in. That's how life was going on. It was miserable. So that's why I said, even if I go out and they kill me, they shoot me, they do anything, they gas me, I want to be away from that camp.

So one day, a commission came. They were looking for sick ones, because they ordered every day 3,000 to 4,000 people from Buchenwald. Buchenwald wasn't getting in any more supplies. So they came to see what's going on, why a person couldn't hold out a week there.

So anyways, they came. They looked at me. I was swollen. I was swollen from the toes to the head. So I looked healthy.

Anyways, so I came up. Before they left already, they pushed me already back to go to work. So I saw a lot of guys, falling down. They tried all kind of tricks. I figured I'll try something, too.

I walked over, took off my hat, my cap. I stood at attention. The SS jumped on me with the machine guns, with the whips. He says leave him. Let him talk.

So I said look, I fell down. I didn't say I fell down in Deblin, but I fell down in Czestochowa. Let them go prove it now. The Russians are there already. My leg isn't yet put together. It's still broken.

He says you're telling the truth? I said yes. So he took a stick and he poked me in the leg. I pulled up my-- he says, go to the sick ones.

I knew the sick ones they're going to take and either shot them or gas them, whatever it is. So meanwhile, you don't have to work. Because the work were there torture, torture.

They put four sacks cement on two people, on two bars, on the shoulders. They laid it down and you fell on your knees. You couldn't pick it up. First of all, you didn't have the strength.

This is in Flossenburg?

Flossenburg. By the time I came there and I started, I must have weighed-- I don't know if I weighed 70 or 75 pounds. Didn't have the strength no more.

Four sacks, so you fell down, so you got beatings. They kicked you. The SS were the young ones, 12 years, 14 years, 16 years at the most. They took good revenge of you.

From there, they shipped us again. Like I said, I came to Dachau. From Dachau, we stay there. Dachau, it was also people they brought from all the camps.

From all the camps, they brought it in. Overnight, they shipped them to be liquidated. But what happened, my transport, I was liberated by the 10th army, like I said.

We've talked about all these different kinds of places and all these experiences. I'm going to ask you some questions to try to put it into some order, in perspective.

Yes, ma'am.

Of all these experiences with the labor camps and then these different concentration camps, one after another, which was the most painful for you?

The most painful was Flossenburg.

Did you think that you would survive?

No. Because two rich people, I mean, according to their living there, when I had packed in that garbage and I ate it at night and they listened, even though it was cold, quiet outside. One of them, he was rich and came out, from a very religious family. Price was the name.

He said to me I knew your father. He talked to my conscience. At that time, there was no conscience at that time. That time was only you and that's it.

He said to me, please, give me something. Let me. Let me. But he talked so much, that he talked even to my conscience. Because as I'll go further, a little bit, as long we have time, when I came in to that first camp, and I got sick, and there was a Polish hospital, there was only Polish doctors. Everything was Polish.

I was working. You asked me by right Gentiles, or what do you call them?

If there was any righteous Gentiles, anyone who helped?

So there was one from that small country, not Norwegian, Luxembourg, Luxembourg. He says, I see you going to die. He says you're getting yellow, and you're swollen and everything. He says let's go to the hospital.

I says well, they'll kill me if I'll come to the door. The doctors were standing with two by fours. The minute you came

near, they banged you over the head.

Like I said before, luck did a lot of things. Money, diamonds didn't do nothing. But luck, because when I came in, I'll go back to Buchenwald, the whole area where I walked out was spread out with diamonds, lit like those lamps.

I mean, you never saw in your life. But it didn't mean a thing. You stepped on them and you walked further. So I'll go back there.

So I came in. He says I'm going to take you. I'm a human being, too, he says.

OK. He talked so long to me, he took me under the arm. Took me to the hospital. I see those doctors are standing with the two by fours.

He says come on. I said I'm afraid. I talked to him in perfect Polish.

Oh, he says, you are one of us. He thought I'm Polish. I says yes. What do I got to lose?

But the only thing I was afraid of, if he undresses me, he'll find out that I'm circumcised. So the story will be different. But anyways, he says if you one of us, go in.

Here is a drape. Go under the drape. I'll give you a robe. Go. I'll give you a good place to lay.

So put on the robe. I went on behind. There was three bunks.

So he says you don't have to climb higher. He says lay on the first one. OK. I lay on the first one.

The first minute, I hear oy, oy, oy. In Europe, the Jewish people, the first word was oy.

Yes.

All right. So with all my strength I worked on, I said, sir, from where are you? He says I'm from L<sup>3</sup>dz. I lost all my family. I'm sick. I'm laying here already the third day-- no, the third week. Excuse me, third week.

He says I'm going to die anyways because they can do nothing for me. I'm all blocked up. I feel I'm going to die.

So anyways, he says, but since you're Jewish, before I die, switch pillows with me. Pillows. What's a pillow? My pillow was a little straw. And his pillow was a little straw.

Over the three weeks, every day that he had a slice of bread, he slipped it in. He slide it in in that pillow. Shook out the straw and put it in the pillow. He was laying on that bread, rocks, like rocks.

The next day, the man is cold. I tap him on the-- so I remind myself that that's what he said. So I took my pillow, throw it to him. Took down the pillow.

He didn't know you. He helped you by telling you that?

He knew that he's going to help me. He was afraid that somebody else would get it.

He was willing to help you with it.

Right. Because he was Jewish. So anyways, so I took that bag, and I put it in my head. Nobody knew it.

When they brought in in the morning the watery tea, from the leaves, you know, from the-- they had special leaves that they would grow by the waters. They made tea. So I brought pieces, throw it in, and it became like a sponge. I ate it. I

came a little bit to me, you know, little by little.

Then they liquidated that camp. I went out. I made it one time back to Buchenwald. As I come in, there were thousands and thousands of people in the barracks.

I went in a barrack. At night, I stood. We couldn't move.

Again, I hear oy, oy. All right. I said soon I'll be able to get to you. He's laying on the second bunk. I'll see what's the matter with you.

I go over to him. He says I'm going to die. He says I want to lay by the door. Otherwise, they'll forget me.

I says what does it make a difference? He says I don't want it. I'm religious. I feel whatever they'll do to me, even they'll burn me, at least they'll do my rights. I said what are rights they're going to do to you?

Anyways, he says if you'll take me to the door, let's switch coats. He was wearing a heavy black coat, heavy. Inside was packed in bread. He couldn't eat it either. He was blocked up.

So I switched it with him. I lay him down by the door the way the man demanded. I took his coat. Even that time, you see, luck, the luck worked with me, and I had the bread.

So whenever I got to the kitchen to get a little bit that water, I put it in and I took it out. Nobody knew it, on the side. That's the way I was living from time to time.

So you feel that really luck helped you more than anything else?

Yes, more than anything, more even the guy upstairs, even if I'm religious.

Was there anything particular that was giving you strength?

The only thing was giving me strength because I was human being. I said to myself as long they don't kill me, I'm going to fight. I'm going to fight to the last second. Anything you want to know special?

So you feel it was from inside you? Do you think was God at all with you? Did you feel that or friends?

Maybe God. Something was with me.

Did you expect help from anybody?

When?

For yourself, did you expect help from anybody?

In those days?

Yes. Because you mentioned these two incidents. You didn't sound like you expected that.

No. This was just dumb luck.

Did you think anything about, like, Jews in Palestine or America or Russia?

You didn't think. Only where I thought about America and I said how don't those Jews know something? What's going on?

Why is Roosevelt just like that? Why doesn't he send one plane to knock out the railroad tracks? Why?

The Americans lost so many pilots. They had someplace, a base, or maybe from Russia, from someplace, to come and knock out those lines. Because day and night, you only hear [BUZZING].

The people were going. When they started to liquidate city by city, just nothing helped. You could be the strongest, the smartest. If you went in, you went in.

You have a passport there. I'd like you to show us. That was after you were liberated?

Yes. This was by the American government.

Tell us exactly what it is.

It says that I was liberated by the Americans, so and so, the commandant's name, that place, whatever it is. It's signed by the commandant. I had to bring a picture.

This is the picture. This was already a few months after, when I went out from the hospital. Because right away, they took me to a hospital.

They put me in a hospital, which they couldn't help me, nothing. There was no intervening in those days. They kept me in a dark room. The Americans, they tried to help me.

Where were you? Because you were liberated on the train by--

I was liberated on the train. They took me to a little town that's called Wolfratshausen. Over there, Hitler tried to make his second missile underground.

This then became a DP camp?

This became, then, a DP camp. So I was laying there about five weeks, till six weeks.

Tell us what the money is you're holding.

This is the money from Czechoslovakian camp, Theresienstadt. That's how they tried. This was a model camp. They tried to show the world that everything is fine and rosy.

So you've got a piece of the money from there?

Not from there, I wasn't there. Because the people came from there. That's it.

I want you to also to show me. You told me that after you were liberated, you were in a DP camp, and there was an ORT school there.

Right. I'll give you the bigger thing, then the smaller.

You got to work as a painter.

Yes, as a painter.

Then you were an instructor there in the DP--

I was an instructor. I taught some young boys. They went, unfortunately, in the 1948 war. They got killed on the front.



But this was in the Landsberg displaced persons camp?

It's written on there. You can see it.

Yes. You were a teacher there. How long did you teach there?

Oh, I teach them for three years.

Then I want to go quickly so that we at least know how you got to the United States. You came to the United States in 1950, you said?

1950, yes.

You have the paper from the boat when you came, so we can get a picture of that.

This is the paper what they gave out on the boat.

You were on which boat?

On General Haus.

That was the souvenir edition that they gave everybody when they--

They gave everybody. But I happened to save it.

So we can have that now. So you came in 1950. You came first to New York?

To New York, I stayed a few days. Then I had a friend here, and I wrote him a letter that I'm here. He said you come over here.

That's how you came to Cleveland?

I came here. I started to work. I never lost a day.

You told me that you met your wife in Detroit. She's an American woman.

She's an American woman. I went there to see a friend for the New Years and for the Christmas season. I was introduced to her. I met her there. We got together. That's it, yeah.

Considering all that happened to you, as the final thing, can you tell me how you think the Holocaust experience has affected your life?

The only thing it affect is you can't, even if you go out here to a ball game or you go out to a theater, it's not the enjoyment that you made yourself there. You understand? You made yourself that enjoyment by groups, by other things. Did he took a picture already of my mother?

Mhm. Yes, he got that.

Those? OK.

We have to get to the end.

But otherwise, the only thing I'm happy about it is my son. I got the only son. He's making a good living. He's living a good life.

He is in a free country. He don't know what in other hearts, inside this. I mean, there's all kinds of nationalities. Like I said, they came in more Nazis in this country than all over the world, not particular Germans, Yugoslavs, Ukrainians, Romanians, Poles.

If there was one thing that you would want to leave people to remember as a special message of the Holocaust, what would be the one thing that you would want everybody to remember from this experience?

They should remember it shouldn't come out again, no matter who they are. Because people, no matter what color they have, what religion they believe, they should get together and live a good life. Because it ain't worth fighting because this one is so. It's only jealousy. It's only jealousy.

I see. I want to thank you very much for coming.

You're welcome.

This was three hours' full of tremendous experience-- and that you brought the pictures.

I wish I could explain to you from each branch. There was three years, all kind of branches. But I gave you out the most that I could.

I thank you very, very much.

You're welcome. You're a nice woman. That's it.

OK. I'll turn off.