

All right, we'll start again now. We've got into the concentration camp. Which concentration-- well, you started to tell me, I think, Hannah, that you were--

In Riga.

In Riga. And then what happened?

Well, they took all of us and put us in Riga in a concentration camp.

In Riga?

Outside-- not-- in the ghetto we were men, women, and children together, whoever was left by that time. Now, we were put in a concentration camp.

Was this near the ghetto?

I don't know how far away, but it was in Riga.

You walked? You Don't remember.

No, we were on an open--

Wagons or something.

Wagons, yeah.

OK.

And there we were separated, the men and the women. And children, I don't know if there were any children left. I don't think there were any children. I don't recall.

Was there a name? This camp had a name?

It was called Riga, just Riga concentration camp.

I see. OK.

And we were put-- we were-- took showers and were given the striped--

Clothing.

Clothing, you know, the concentration camp dresses.

Right. Were you given underclothing? Do you remember?

I don't remember. I know I had underclothing.

But it was cold?

Yeah. There was jackets. There were-- see, in the ghetto, we still had civilian clothes from the ones we found. We were given those striped things and jackets with it. It was cold. But that's all we had is the-- it's called [NON-ENGLISH], this blue and white, you know, the blue and gray.

I've seen pictures, yes.

I still have the dress and--

Really?

Yeah, I have the dress. Nobody wants it.

Well, no, of course not. But I'm surprised--

But I haven't parted with it. I just was liberated in it, and I saved it all these years.

You wore it for many years.

Yeah, well--

All right, now, how long were you in this Riga camp?

We were put in barracks. And there already, we were like three-- you know, like you see in all the pictures.

Tiers.

Tiers.

The bunks.

And bunks. And then it was bad. I mean that was already very little food, separated from the men for the people that were married and so on, families. I was single. And my mother was with me then.

But we were separated during that time because from there they took some people and put them in some other labor camps for work though. This was still for work because my mother worked for the German Wehrmacht. That's the army.

Right.

The army. She did sorting out clothes that came from the front. I mean there was a certain-- there were certain groups of workers. And I was working on cables, those thick cables that they make for the front. You know this was all war effort.

And that saved my life because I worked. We marched out. There too, we marched out and worked. But you got up at 5 o'clock in the morning. And then you just had to stand and be counted. These things-- I mean this was not any more ghetto where you had a little bit of freedom for yourself. This was regimented and counted every morning and people collapsed from hunger. And people died like flies. And the young ones, of course, like were luckier because--

They were stronger.

Stronger, yeah.

Can you tell me, can you describe your arrival in the camp?

Well, we were put into barracks.

Well, when you first got off the train, or the wagons.

The wagons, we were put-- I think we had to take shower and we're given dresses. And the SS always there of course--

Watching you.

--with the standing there, watching and no modesty. I mean it's just sneering at us and very, very degrading and beating the older ones, the people couldn't walk fast enough, beating and kicking. And when we were standing to be counted every morning, each barrack had to go out every morning and stand in attention. And then they were going down the line and--

Like a roll call.

A roll call. And if something wasn't-- sometimes for hours, you know, it was-- there was pretty sad.

What was your daily routine then? You worked on the cables, as you said. You went out of the-- this was in the camp?

No, we went out of the camp.

I see. Were you taken or did you walk out?

Not right away. I did some other work. But I really don't even recall at the beginning. But I did-- my luck was my girlfriend and I worked with cables, repairing the cables in one of those big rubber factories. We learned how to do this. They taught us how to do this.

And now what year was this?

In Riga.

This was what year?

In '43.

In '43. Of December of '43?

Of '43, right.

OK.

No, that wasn't December. I don't remember the months.

OK.

That was--

Later.

But we were put in a concentration camp, like I said. And we worked. And already, my mother was out-- she was someplace else. We were separated.

Did they give you a number at that time?

No, in Riga, they didn't give us a number.

All right. Now, were there-- do you remember if you were guarded by Germans or non-Germans?

Some Germans and some-- the Latvian, they spoke German though, but they were horrible.

They were never really civil to you?

No, but there was-- let's say, there was, for instance, one man-- I must mention this because that should show that not all humanity is bad. There was one SS man that helped my girlfriend and me and gave us food. It was all-- I mean it was-- nobody was supposed to see it. And he worked in the kitchen.

And I remember my girlfriend helped peel potatoes or something. And she came home and came to the barrack. And she hid it in her sleeve, a salami and pieces of bread. I mean so we-- everything-- food was the most important.

Of course.

Food was the most important because we just got so little to eat.

And you got thinner and thinner then?

Thinner, very thin. And one incident, one night, one of the SS men came in and took me out of bed. And I slept with my girlfriend in a bunk. We slept together. And he took me out of bed. This is one thing that sticks in my mind.

And he made me go in one of the empty-- one of the barracks where there was showers or something empty. And he made me undress. They had this thing with young girls. I mean I was pretty. I was young. Even though I had lost weight, I still had my hair. They shaved our heads later. But at that time, I still had my hair.

And I was what 20 years or 21 years old. So he did not rape me or anything. But he just made me march in front of him. And my girlfriend almost went crazy. But he took me back and never did anything to me. But somehow I had-- he must have liked me and wanted to look. And what could I do?

Nothing. I could understand. Right.

So anyhow, we had this SS man that helped us with food for a while. And he said, listen, I have children. He said to my girlfriend, I have children your age. I have a daughter your age. And I feel for you. So you see--

There were some human beings.

There were a few. There were a few. But I did forget to mention that there was a commandant in the ghetto that shot a lot of people on the spot-- whoever he didn't like, whomever he didn't like. If he didn't like somebody, he met them on the street, he always had the gun. And people used to say, Kraus is coming. That was his name. Kraus is coming. He used to go just shoot without, you know--

But then again, there were some young girls he liked. And he would take them in for dinner. I mean they did such crazy things, you know. It's just unpredictable. So you see, it wasn't normal.

How many people do you judge were in the Riga concentration camp? Do you have any idea?

Well, they weren't just Jews. There were a few others, political-- political or-- what do you call--

Gypsies?

No, not Gypsies. Robbers and criminals.

Criminals.

Criminals. And, you know, they were our overseers.

Oh. They were our--

They were not Jewish. They were a little better than you.

They were non-Jewish.

And they were bad, but not quite as bad you.

The red ones were political. The green ones were criminals. I don't remember exactly. But they were the head of the block. Each block had one of those guys. And there were some--

A block is a barrack?

Yeah, a barrack.

OK.

And they were our-- they were overseeing us. Over them, of course, were the Nazis. But they were treated pretty good. I mean they had freedom and food and whatnot. But--

When you say freedom, that means freedom in the camp?

Right. They got enough to eat. And they could boss us around. And they treated-- you know what, they treated us just as bad.

Really?

Most of them, yeah.

How many were in your immediate block or barracks?

I would say maybe 500. I really can't--

This was two or three tiers of just bunks--

3 tiers of bunks.

But there were no other living spaces? You just lived in this bunk? That was--

There were bunks. And I think there were benches to sit. And--

Well, where did you eat your food? Right there? Everything was right there.

In the bunk right there. That's all.

That was your whole life. That was where you lived, like a cage.

That's it.

Were there children in the camp.

Every morning we were counted. And every evening we were counted, you know, standing outside.

And what if somebody was so sick they couldn't come out to be counted.

Well, then they disappeared. They just disappeared, you know. But there too were hangings. And then there were people that were picked up. People always disappeared, and even though there was a hospital, like one of the barracks. But if you weren't sick you, had a chance.

I see. Were there children there?

I don't recall any children being-- in the ghetto, yes. But they had already--

But in the camp, no?

Taken. No, been taken away.

Were you aware of any religious services in the camp or secret prayers? Were there any--

In the ghetto, they did.

But in the camp?

Not in the camp any longer.

No longer that even?

Well, even though, I think we knew when there was a holiday. Somehow--

Somebody knew. Somebody knew.

--contact and we did a little bit. But there was no Sabbath or something like this.

No. I understand.

We worked every day. And that was it, you know.

Seven days a week, there was never--

Never. There was never a break. No. No. But we were glad to work because it kept us busy.

Well, that's right.

You know. But there, I know there was a time that we became acquainted with this soldier that was the head of this cable-- this was a big factory in Germany. It was called AEG, which means-- it's A-E-G, Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft. It's a German, big, big firm, you know. I think it's still--

A manufacturing firm?

Manufacturing firm.

Electrical things.

And they made those cables. And through them, this group of women that I was with survived because they made us work for them. And then later on, as I will tell you in the next camp, they again asked for us. And they got us out of the camp that way, you see.

OK, so the employers, you mean?

Right.

Now, you say the next camp. So at what time-- then you stayed-- you were here living in this Riga camp until when?

It was about August of '44.

August of '44. And what happened then?

The Russians were approaching. You see, it was Latvia.

Riga is near there. Right.

And they knew they had to relocate us again. Already, it was--

They didn't want you to be liberated.

They put us on boats this time.

On boats.

Because by the water and took us to Danzig. You know where Danzig is?

Yes. That was a free city at one time.

Right.

Right. After World War I.

Right.

Right.

They took us to Danzig. There was another concentration camp.

What was that camp called?

It was just called Danzig concentration. It had no name-- Stutthof, I'm sorry. It was called Stutthof.

Stutthof.

Stutthof.

This was Danzig. And this was very far north, right?

It was on the-- we were on the boat, an open boat, just with what we had on.

How long did you travel on that boat?

Well, first we were on a big boat. And I know it was a High Holy days. It was Yom Kippur. It was in the fall. And the people were-- we were all sick, I remember that. But people were--

Sea sick you mean?

Yeah. Sea sick. But people were praying.

Sure.

It was Yom Kippur. I'll remember that. I'll never forget. It was a High Holy day.

This was 1940--

'44.

4. In the fall.

And we knew the war wasn't going so well. We knew. And so that brought us--

It was hopeful. There was hope, a little hope for you, right.

And we were brought to Danzig. And from the big boat they put us on those little boats. And we had to go on those little boats. And I remember there was no bathrooms. And we--

Terrible.

Horrible conditions, horrible conditions. And we were brought into this big camp. This was much, much bigger because there were people from all over, and it was--

From many countries?

Many countries. And all kinds of languages already this was. And that was even worse than Riga because there were with the dogs and the-- and the whips.

And so describe your entry into that camp.

It was horrible. That was absolutely horrible because they were whipping us and chasing us. And there were-- we were all full of lice. And we were-- oh, I forgot to say that they cut our hair. No, I think the hair they cut afterwards. They shaved our heads.

This was 1944. At this point, you're 22 years old.

No, I wasn't 22. No way.

Well, '44, if you were born in '22--

In '22-- I was 20-- I came to this country-- I was-- was it before-- it must be. I'm confused. I was-- 19, I was put in.

All right.

Yeah. Anyhow, we came to Danzig. And we put into this camp which was--

What was the name of the camp, you said--

Stutthof.

Stutthof.

Stutthof.

OK.

It was a big camp. And I'm surprised so few people know about it.

Tell me, do you have any idea how many people were in this camp? There was, I would say, 5,000 to 8,000 people. It was a big camp.

A city. A city.

Right. All with wire and electrical wires and big towers and crematoriums already there. This--

Oh.

This camp, see, Riga did not have-- they only shooting, a lot of shootings going on and hangings. But this already was the end, towards, and they had to go faster.

Right. Right.

But--

So you came into this camp. You came off the boat. And they were there.

In this camp.

And were you with your mother still?

No. I had-- my mother and I had lost contact. And we met again in this camp. I heard my mother was there. And I remember running and looking for her in all the barracks. And I did find her. And I mean, she looked-- I started crying. She looked just horrible. But she was in good spirits. She says, why are you crying.

You probably looked horrible too.

She said to me-- I said, you so thin. I remember she was so skinny. But she was mentally--

Alert.

Still OK.

Well, she still was young.

She was then-- she was born in '91, so around 50.

Right. Right. OK.

Anyhow, I saw her again. And she had worked and survived. That was '44.

Now, how long had you been separated from the time you left her in Riga camp till the time you arrived--

I don't know exactly recall. But I always-- I heard always-- there were a lot of kommandos that worked and saw her. So I knew she was alive. You know, you got kind of messages, not by writing, but through people.

But I met her again in Stutthof and knew she was OK. But I again was lucky that I was asked to go to work for this factory.

The same factory or another-- whatever.

The officer came into the camp and demanded that he wants the same group of people. And this really saved our lives.

Sure, you were trained already.

Right.

And so this group of people after I was there about six weeks in Stutthof. And my mother worked too. But we were separated again. And that was the last I saw of her because I heard later on that she never survived Stutthof.

So you were only six weeks in Stutthof.

I was about five or six weeks.

And then what happened?

Then we were--

Again exported--

Taken away. Yes. We were-- Stutthof was horrible. And the crematorium were burning. And the people were dying. And it was a very horrible situation. And food was even less.

But we were thrilled to be called to work again. And this group of women, maybe-- I don't remember, maybe there was more, maybe about 100. Anyhow, we were called taken away to Poland, to a city-- it was called Torunia, which is now Torun. Or this is called Thorn. It's a city in Poland where they had erected a factory, I guess close to the front, you know, close to the--

Now, tell me, how were you taken there from--

On buses.

On buses.

Not buses to sit. On open-- on those flat back.

OK, trucks.

Like soldiers are traveling. On those--

I understand. Right. Just benches. And you sat there.

Right. So we were taken there and put in barracks. But that was not so terrible because we were working.

And this was-- what was the name of this place?

In Poland.

Oh, in Poland. Torun, right.

But this was very small. It was only this group of women.

Oh.

So it wasn't a big camp. It was just the people that worked for this particular--

Really wasn't a camp.

No. It wasn't a camp. But it was-- we were--

Like a place to live because we were working there.

We were sleeping on boards, like 20 women. You know, there were boards up and down.

With no mattresses? With no nothing?

There were straw.

And blankets?

Blanket.

Pillows?

I don't know, pillows. Straw pillow, I guess was there. Yeah.

And only with this uniform, you had no other--

During all this time, we had all this one uniform. And we washed-- we washed with cold water. And we washed-- we brushed our teeth with our fingers. And we survived with that. And we washed our underwear.

You had shoes?

And we had-- some people had wooden shoes. And some people still had regular shoes.

Yeah, whatever was left.

Whatever was left. But at least we worked. And this really saved our lives.

OK, so now how long were you in this little camp, this little place where you were working. It really wasn't--

We worked with the cables.

Yeah.

And worked there till the Russian army approached. And they knew, and they took us and they made us walk on a march. They knew that they were close. We heard, you know-- it was towards the end of the war. It was in January of '45.

I see. OK.

Now, I developed typhoid fever then, at the end of this. And I could never march. But I had this dear, dear friend that I've been in the camp all these years. And we had some sleds. They put me on a sled.

Where did they-- where did you march?

And they took us through Poland.

In the snow?

Away from-- it was deep snow, yeah. They took us--

Snow and freezing cold.

Freezing cold.

And you had nothing but this little lightweight--

This jacket and the dress. And they put me-- she put me-- she was really my--

Your savior.

My savior. And I had typhoid fever. I was very sick. But I had no more fever at the time. But I was so weak I couldn't walk. And she took me on a sled. And we marched till the Russians liberated us in Poland a few days later.

We were a few days on the road. And I froze my toes, I remember that, because I didn't move. And she rubbed them with snow. And now they say it isn't good to rub them with snow. But I remember it helped me. I survived and didn't lose my toes. Like many people froze to death.

But then the Russians came--

The Nazi--

--as a army--

Just, they were guarding us. But all of a sudden, there were shooting. The Nazis ran away and just left us.

Oh.

And we ran into different directions. We were marching on a road. And we ran into some people's homes. I couldn't run. My girlfriend says, stay here. And I remember, stay there. And then she schlepped me into somebody's house.

And these were Poles, but they spoke fluent German. This is a part of Poland that was Germany at one time.

Yeah, well, those countries changed back and forth--

And they spoke German. And they were Nazis too.

They were Nazis.

They wanted us because they figured through us they will save their lives. You see, by now they wanted us because--

They were going to say that--

If the Russians come and they see--

Look, we took care of these people.

That's-- I mean, it was selfish reasons.

I see. Well, OK.

So now we were liberated. But really not liberated.

The Russians came. All right. And so what-- so they took you away from these home, this house, or what happened?

We were in this house with these Polish people. And then the bombs started flying. And the shooting started. And the Russians came.

And we were laying in the basement. But there we were, all of a sudden, we had a bed. They gave us a bed with feather pillows. And they gave us food--

After how many years--

That made us deathly sick. My girlfriend was terribly sick--

Because you hadn't eaten so--

Because she ate some rich stuff.

And the body couldn't--

I couldn't walk with this-- typhoid left me crippled that I couldn't walk. I had like sciatica, you know--

Pains.

Anyhow, I was in bed. And we waited it out. It took like three or four days. And these Poles helped us to the point where they didn't give us-- you know, they hid us till the Russians really liberated the city.

Came into this town. I see. The Nazis had all fled.

The Nazis had fled. And they took over. So I was actually liberated already in January of '41, when the war was-- when the Russians came--

You don't mean '41. You mean '45.

Right. Sorry. So I was liberated, but very sick at the time. Then I was really never sick during all these years, you know. And I can't even recall having a cold.

You mean since your the war?

Since I was in the camp. But then I got just at liberation. And this is how so many people couldn't survive. But I luckily had my girlfriend that--

She really cared for.

Really--

And in a way, it was almost good that you weren't taken into this home. You were given probably broth and things, hot things to eat that you hadn't had before.

Right. Right. These people were-- I mean-- and all the others from this-- you know, some of them died on the road. And some of them got shot at the end. But the SS ran away. And whoever was in this march, some of them, they ran into the homes. They went into the barns. And we survived that way. That was the end while the war was still going on in

Europe, you know.

Well, what was the-- then you were liberated.

Then we were with the Russians, which wasn't so good either.

You were with the-- you went with them?

No, we stayed there for a while. And I was put in a hospital for a few weeks to learn-- with hot water bottles and crutches and to get back--

They gave you medical attention.

The Polish people did. The Polish-- this was liberation. But there was no more German. Then it was the Poles and the Russians. And they helped me get well. And I learned how to walk. And then we put on a little weight. And so this was-- I mean unbelievable. And, of course, I didn't know what happened to my mother. And there was no communication because the war was still going on.

Were you still with your girlfriend? She stayed--

Always.

You were together?

Always together. We were inseparable. And everybody knew us. They said the Blonde and the Dark. She was dark haired, you know. So we saved each other in many ways. So it's good to have a buddy.

So immediately after liberation what happened? What was life like?

Well, I always say the months till the war was over, those months weren't very good either. They were bad. The Russians didn't treat us well. Sorry to say--

They mistreated you? As bad as the Nazis?

Number one is we only spoke German, and they thought we were Germans. See, a lot of the Eastern European girls knew Polish. They were Polish. They were-- we weren't all German. By that time, we were mixed, Polish, Latvian. But the German Jews don't know many of these languages.

So we had a hard time convincing them that we are-- so we learned a little bit of Russian to tell them at least, I'm Jewish, I'm from a camp. But the Russians were very-- they weren't too civilized. Only the officers-- and the officers were mostly Jewish at that time. And they helped us. They helped us.

And we stayed in Poland. I got better and my girlfriend--

You were in the hospital for a while?

I was in the hospital for a month or a few weeks.

And then you got better. And your girlfriend was still there.

Then we went-- we didn't know what to do. And then some committees formed. And I know that we worked again for an office, or for some Polish officer, a Jewish Polish officer. We worked in a household as maids just to have a house, a home.

Did you read the book Sophie's Choice?

Yeah.

Was this the type of life you had?

Kind of. Kind of.

We read these fiction things and we don't know--

Yeah, they-- yes, that's true. So we worked for the officer. But neither one of us like Poland. And neither of us liked the Polish people. And we tried to-- we figured we got to go somewhere and see who survived, go back home.

You tried to find family members?

Right. But the war was still raging. So when the war ended in-- was it April? May? When was the war over?

In mid-April I think.

Yeah.

Yeah. In '45.

We tried to get back to--

You knew then that the peace had been declared--

Right.

--and the armistice signed.

We knew. And we already by that time had-- we didn't know what happened to our-- well, my girlfriend's parents disappeared. This I think I mentioned. They disappeared while she was at work. Her mother and father and a little brother, six years old, disappeared while she was at work. That was in the Riga ghetto, so to go back to that. So she-- we both really were just the two of us.

So we went back. We tried to go back to our hometown because we figured we have to go back home--

Your hometown was Hanover?

Hanover, yeah.

She was from there too?

Right.

OK.

So we--

Whom did you find there?

But Germany was divided at that time, you see. You couldn't just go. It took days. You had to go over the Russian-- there was the English zone and American zone. We were hiding in a truck under the cover. And in order to get back

over-- the river was the River Elba was the border.

So we went back to Hanover. And, of course, asking all kinds of-- by that time, other people had returned.

What did you find there?

First of all, I found ruins. You know, the city was in ruins. And we found from the 1,000 people that had been sent away, there was maybe 15.

Who returned? Oh, who stayed there--

No, no, that had survived this whole thing.

Came back, right.

And some of them never even came back. But there was a few-- there's a group of maybe 15 people out of the 1,000 that have since--

You found each other back in Hanover. Everybody wanted to go home.

Right. I think the Joint Distribution, you know, started right-- started-- they opened offices and--

To help you.

The survivors. And gave us shelter. They gave us food stamps. Food was not plentiful in those days after the war. But--

Well, where did you live when you went back to Hanover?

We rented a room. People had roomers.

You had money?

It was destroyed-- they gave us money.

JDC gave you money.

Not a lot, but enough to survive. Food didn't cost-- they gave us stamps.

I see.

So we got by. And then we started, of course, celebrating to be liberated and survived his ordeal and lived recklessly, you know, just to-- we were so young. And, of course, nobody found their parents. My brother luckily was in America.

Now. All right--

She had a brother in America and had lost a sister and one other brother survived too that was with us. So everybody looked only for survivors, who had survived.

OK, what gave you strength and hope?

Well, you know, we were young--

You had trust in the future.

And I did-- I was well again. And I was young. And I really wanted to live. And I did remember through all these years my brother's address in America.

Oh, how marvelous.

So I did remember his address. And when the war was over, I did write to him. And I put my name on the survivor's list to tell my other relatives in Israel that I had survived. And then, of course, the mail started coming in.

Oh, so there were lists made available--

Yes.

--through various--

I met an English soldier. And he was the Cantor in our town in Halberstadt. I mean, you meet-- you met people from all over the world. I met this English soldier that liberated and came back and met me, and he had a daughter my age that didn't survive. I mean it was just heartbreaking. And he got in touch with my family in Israel and told them that I'm survived, but my mother didn't. And my mother was--

Meanwhile, did that family in Israel get in touch with you and say, come to Israel--

Yes, got in touch-- well, I had my choice at that time where I wanted to go. But having only one brother, I figured I want to go to America.

What were your thoughts about the Jewish community in the US at that time? I mean were you resentful that there was so little help--

Yes, I was. I was really bitter that because of this piece of paper, this-- you know, I needed an affidavit and you needed somebody--

To be able to come to this country and certainly hard to get--

What burden would my mother-- what burden would we have been?

Oh, this was even before the--

So when I was liberated, why? How--

How selfish.

How selfish that-- my brother, OK, somebody helped him and sent him a ticket. But so many people could have survived. I mean what kind of burden would my mother have been? She knew how to sew. She knew how to-- and we weren't helpless people. We were educated. I mean I went to school only till I was 14. But I mean I think I'm just as educated as other people here and have a job here and worked and did all kinds of things.

Right. Well, what were your thoughts when you were in the camp in Danzig? What it was so terrible that no one seemed to be helping, nobody in the outside world.

Very helpless.

I mean did you think about that at all? Doesn't the world see what's happening.

Yeah, we thought about it. And we felt lost, deserted--

Terrible.

Terrible. Terrible.

So young--

But we had hope.

Well, that was wonderful.

We had hope.

Did have thoughts about the future then?

I guess you--

Well, the hope was--

The hope was there. And I think you thought about it, yeah. I think being as young as I was, I thought about it and hoped that things would be all right again. But look at all those lost years, and not just the years and the camp, even the last years in my home town. I mean how repressed we were and everything.

OK, now, is there anything else about those years that you'd like to share with us?

Well, after liberation-- no, after I came-- I'm trying to think all right now.

Now, you got help from JDC--

Right.

Joint Distribution Committee.

It took me one year to come to America.

Now, all right, now, why did it take so long? And-- or who helped you?

Well, mine was the second transport that came here.

So it wasn't long.

It wasn't long at all.

I see.

It took a while. And you had to live in the American zone in order to come. I lived in Hanover, which was English at the time. So I had to establish residency in Frankfurt in order to-- so that took time. They wouldn't-- it was-- everything was--

Very, very complicated.

So I had to go to Frankfurt with my girlfriend. And she was married. She got married. She married one of the Riga survivors, one of the Riga Jews.

In Frankfurt? Or--

She married him in Hanover after the war. A lot of people got married, some that survived. Or some were the men survived and the women survived, and they got married and started a new life.

All right. So then you moved to Frankfurt.

I moved to Frankfurt for just a very short time because I knew I would be one of the first ones having a brother in this country.

I see.

So I think I was on the second transport coming to this country.

Now, you say a transport. This is a ship?

Yeah, it was a troop ship.

A troop ship.

It was called a Marine Perch. It was like a camp-- I mean bunks, very bad. It was no luxury.

Was your girlfriend and her husband on the same ship with you?

No. She was pregnant already at that time--

I see, so she couldn't travel.

--and couldn't come with me. But she came a boat or two later. Somehow she did because--

With the baby?

--they wouldn't let you travel-- no, pregnant.

Oh, all right.

But her husband came-- they came all separate. We all came separate.

So from Frankfurt, where did you catch that boat? Where did you have to go?

In Frankfurt.

Oh, Frankfurt's on the water? I didn't realize that.

I'm trying to think. We didn't go to Hamburg. No, from Frankfurt. Frankfurt.

OK.

I didn't know either. But it is.

All right.

I know I didn't go anyplace else-- it's-- oh, Bremerhaven, it's a little city outside, not far from Frankfurt. It isn't right on the water. But I know we went from there.

So you took this ship, this transport. Now, how long did this take you?

It took 10 days.

10 days.

Yeah. Now it takes a half a day by plane.

Yeah, right.

And we were sick on the boat.

And you were sick on the boat. And there were how many of you on living in--

Lots.

Like this like the early immigrants that came in the early '20s.

Right. Right

That same terrible story of--

Awful. Awful. Awful. Awful.

You had to pay for this trip?

Very sick.

Who paid for this trip?

The--

JDC?

HIAS.

Oh, HIAS.

What is HIAS actually? Hebrew--

Aid Society. I don't know what the I is for.

Well, I know that--

Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society.

The HIAS paid for mine, while a lot of them were paid by the--

Joint.

--Joint, yeah, right. And my brother was, of course, at the boat.

He met you?

He met me.

Recognized you? How many years had been since you'd seen each other?

'37 till-- eight, nine years.

And so now at this point you were in your early 20s.

Right.

1945, you were 23 years old.

And I was absolutely thrilled, you know. I mean this was the highlight--

And he was two years old-- and he was still living--

My brother had worked all these years and saved some money and--

Was he still living in Utica with the uncle?

He lived in Utica, yeah.

The uncle still living?

Then we moved out. I lived there for a little while.

You went back to Utica. From the boat, you took a train--

From the boat I stayed in New York. We have an uncle there too that had survived, that had gone with my brother at the time. But he was happy that I came. He was my father's brother and with a wife and son. And they very lovely.

And what a joyful--

I stayed there. And I saw Radio City. I never forget it, the first day. And they took me out and my brother gave me \$50--

What a lot of money then--

To buy--

Clothing. Did you speak English at the time?

Some. Some.

Oh, how exciting that must have been for you.

Yeah.

Really, I mean to-- the golden city.

The golden Medina, yeah.

Yes. Yes. OK, now--

See my tears come.

Of course they come. My tears are here too. So you came to this country. And you stayed in New York for a little bit. You got help from HIAS.

Yeah. And then I went to Utica.

You went to Utica with your brother.

Took an apartment.

Alone?

With my brother.

Oh, with your brother. He left the uncle. Or he maybe had left earlier--

Well, he said, now I have my sister here, you know. He took a apartment and bought furniture. And I forgot to mention a big part because I met my future husband on the boat coming over.

Oh, wonderful.

And he was then my not my husband. And we corresponded. He lived in New York.

He stayed in New York?

He stayed in New York a short while. Didn't like New York and moved to Cleveland. This is how I got to Cleveland.

I see.

And worked for-- he was liberated-- he was six years in Buchenwald, six years and survived because he was a Polish from Polish parents and they put them in in '39--

Where was his original home?

Dresden, Germany. And he was six years in Buchenwald and survived six years Buchenwald, one camp. And he came to-- he met a soldier that liberated him. I just want to add this. And this soldier said to him, if ever you survive and come to America, look me up, and I'll give you a job in Cleveland, Ohio.

Do you remember that man's name?

Yeah. I know. He just passed away. He was from Bruder's Dairy. You remember Bruder's?

Bruder's Dairy, yeah, of course. Yes.

He was Bruder's--

What was the name? Do you remember? Was it Friedman?

Lila and-- his name was-- he just passed away. I don't know his first name. He was at that time a young guy in his 20s.

His last name-- was his name--

Bruder.

Oh, his name was Bruder.

He liberated Buchenwald, one of the soldiers.

He was one of the liberators.

And he came-- my husband came here--

And looked him up.

--and looked him up. And he got a job at the dairy store. He had--

There were many. It was a chain of stores.

Alan was his name, Alan Bruder.

Alan Bruder. OK, so then, all right, you were living with your brother.

Right. And corresponded with--

And corresponded with the boyfriend.

That was on the boat.

Were you really engaged at the time or--

No, not really.

But you were fond of each other.

But he came to Utica and looked me up. And I went once to New York and saw him when he was still in New York. He moved to Cleveland. And this is how when we got married a year later, we decided to get married, I moved to Cleveland.

You came to Cleveland. But actually he helped you settle here. And--

He helped me settle.

Did anybody help you get-- well, it was just your brother. No organization helped you in Utica.

No. Once I was here my brother--

That was it. You didn't-- you didn't need--

That's it.

--for adjustment or anything. For instance, Jewish Family Service? Jewish vocational--

I didn't really-- no, I didn't really-- after I was here, I had my brother.

You got married then when you came to Cleveland. And you had a wedding--

I had right away-- in Utica, I worked for a year and saved money. I was a dressmaker at the time.

For a shop of some sort?

A shop. And I made money right away. I mean I was no burden to anybody, you know. So I worked.

And it was wonderful being with family--

I went to the movies and learned English. This is how I learned English. I went to the movies all the time.

How wonderful.

And in Utica is a small community. You really had to speak English. There really was no Germans.

Did you get involved in a synagogue or a temple here?

Yeah, we were not really involved. No membership. But I went.

And on occasion. Right.

Because I had the background. I'm from quite a religious background.

Right. So it was meaningful to you. Yeah. And did you make any friends there?

Yeah, I made friends. And I made-- they even made me shower. I didn't know what a shower was. But then I got married in Richfield Springs, which is outside Utica.

Oh, your brother made the wedding?

Well, I had a cousin--

And he had money.

A second cousin there.

But there was a little bit of a family.

Yes, there was. And it was very nice. Then I moved--

To Cleveland.

To Cleveland.

All right, when you came to Cleveland, did you meet people who wanted to learn what you or others went through? Were you able to talk about your experiences then? Or did well not want to?

Well, I have a lot of friends with the same background. And, of course, we talk about it with my own people.

Even in those years-- where were you? Where were you? You learn these things.

Yes, because you wanted to hear. But Americans, at that time, there was really not that much interest that anybody would want to know my story.

Did you get to know Americans immediately? Or did you sort of stick the--

I worked. Well, my maybe my closest friends were European. But I had American friends. And they knew I was a

survivor. But I never really discussed it. But I didn't keep it secret either, you know. I mean it came up every so often. And I discussed it. But I didn't--

Yeah, you didn't elaborate. And nobody really--

My family, I told.

You think maybe-- do you think that maybe some of the American people and friends that you made felt they were intruding on a very difficult time and perhaps didn't ask for that reason?

Well, I don't think they were to interested.

Would you have liked them to have asked?

Yes, I guess I would have.

Good friends, of course.

I wanted to talk about it. And I did talk to my family about it. And I wrote to my mother's surviving brothers in Israel in detail. I wrote I like to write. So I do I did a lot of writing and told them what happened to their sister, my mother.

Everybody loved her. She was such a wonderful person. And she was religious. And she was good hearted and everything.

OK, so after you were married and living in Cleveland, what did you-- and your husband is working at Bruder's.

Right. Well, there lasted only a short time. And he was working at a necktie store. And I worked with him for a while downtown. We had nice jobs and started the home and rented at first like everybody. And we had two daughters.

Did you join a synagogue at that time?

Yes, we joined the--

Why did you join?

Well, I was always--

You were brought up in a religious--

Brought up-- and people say, we had a conversation yesterday with friends. And they said, what's religion? People were liberated and they said there's no God and who needs it? I felt different.

You felt you did need it.

I just felt different. I still till today love synagogue and love Jewish life.

Was your rabbi helpful, comforting? Were you able to talk with him about things that bothered you?

I joined a congregation--

Or about your past?

I joined a congregation that's all--

Survivors.

It's called-- it was called Gates of Hope at the time. It was founded by survivors.

I remember that name.

It's now Mayfield Hillcrest Synagogue, but it's--

Are you still involved with that synagogue?

Yeah. So it's--

Then the synagogue did play-- what kind of a role did it play in your life and in your family's life?

Well, I was attending and being active and--

The sisterhood--

Yeah, so my children, when they were born, they were in kindergarten.

It played a part?

Quite a big part. And they were confirmed. And they had the bat mitzvah. And they had confirmation.

Oh, how lovely.

And they got married there too. So--

Are you active now in any organized Jewish--

I belong-- I belong to Hadassah, B'nai B'rith, Sisterhood.

Well, then you were--

Kol Israel Foundation.

But you're working. And you don't have time for a lot of involvement.

I don't have too much time because I have worked for 17 years at the same job now.

How do you feel as a Jew in the United States?

I feel good. I feel free.

You ever feel fearful?

No. I never felt fearful.

No. No.

No.

I mean--

After having gone through what we went through this is the land of freedom I mean.

This is so important that we're doing this type of thing--

Yes.

--and that you're sharing your experiences so that people should know--

I understand--

--what happened.

Right.

And you feel this way?

I feel they should know definitely.

Right. Right. Right.

I really feel that they should know what happened because human nature is a strange thing. And I hope, I just hope-- I mean I have children. I have a little grandchild. God forbid something like this should ever happen again, dictators, you know. But--

Right. Right.

I am active in all kinds of Jewish organizations, very pro-Israel. I've been in Israel four times.

How wonderful.

But I did lose my husband when he was-- he had cancer. So I lost him in '71 and was widowed for six years and remarried in 1977. So I did remarry. And--

How did you train for your current work? You're now you said a dental technician?

I'm not a technician. But I'm a dental--

Assistant.

Assistant. I learned it on the job. I'm a dental assistant and a secretarial--

Is the is the dentist you work for Jewish?

Yes, he's Jewish.

Is he a survivor by any chance?

No. He's American. And he teaches dental school.

How did you happen to get the job? You just-- it was an ad in the paper or something?

No, I was doing-- I was doing really seamstress work because I did that in Germany. And then I did photography work. I did darkroom work. I learned that on the job. I worked for a photographer--

Here in this country?

Yeah. I did. And then when colored photos came into-- you know, it became the style, and there was done different process. I just, by accident, went to this dentist. He was my dentist. And he lost his girl. And this girl said, don't you know anybody? I says, could I try it? And it just was a matter of-- so I'm there 17 years now. So I'm a half a dentist.

I can imagine. I bet you're more than half a dentist.

So I work and like my work. I'm glad I'm busy. I still like sports. And--

Are you active in any--

No. But--

You like to watch-- you're a spectator?

A spectator. I enjoy it. And I have fun with my children.

Wonderful, wonderful. Now, just a few more things I think we should talk about. Can you please tell me how your Holocaust experiences affect you now?

Well--

I mean this has been an probably an opening and a difficult time--

It all comes back.

That's right. But I mean, even prior to the fact, when you were approached would you take part in this project--

I feel I wanted--

Did you have any-- you said you sometimes have dreams.

I wanted to share it. My children have been wanting-- wanted me to do this for a long time. And they get me a tape recorder. And they wanted me to do it for them, tell us. I did tell them orally. But to sit down by myself and do this, I just-- and even today, they said to me, Mom, try to get a tape because we would really like to know.

So I would like to share it with people to know. Each story in itself is different. But it was a terrible time in history.

Of course.

It was-- I mean I think about it now, how did we survive? But we did survive. And--

Very strong people.

I like to share it with people.

How often do you think about the Holocaust? I mean prior to, as I say this contact--

Not that often. But like yesterday I was together with people that have the same kind of background so that it came up and then it got the whole discussion, became a whole discussion, you know, about God and things.

You sometimes do talk about it with your friends.

Yes, we do talk about it.

Right. What thoughts do you have now about these terrible experiences and about, not only you, the whole Holocaust, what thoughts do you have?

Well, certain things could have been-- could have been avoided. There could have been more survivors if the people in the different countries would have taken in. There weren't, you know, that many that they couldn't have saved a lot of them. I mean there was just-- it wasn't-- that could have been, not all of it, but a lot of it could have been avoided if--

But when people say you could have ran away, could have run away, or why didn't you run, it wasn't that way. You couldn't-- there was no place to run. There was no place. Unless you were in the woods and you were partisan or-- but you were young and you had nobody to help you, very, very difficult, very difficult.

My thoughts, I feel it should-- it should not have happened. I mean it's an impossible thing to even think now. Why did this all happen, you know? Just because I'm Jewish. I didn't do anything. And look what they did to us for all these years, you know. But--

To what extent do you feel that the Holocaust has affected your present physical health?

Well, as I'm getting older, you know, everybody has some aches and pains.

Sure.

I have a lot of arthritis and-- but some of it may be contributed to the cold and the many years in the cold climate, you know. But otherwise, I think in pretty good health. I live with it. And everybody says, you're a survivor, you'll survive a lot of things. Yeah.

All right, we'll stop for just a few minutes again, take a break, and then come back and finish up

OK.