

And if at any time, you feel that you want to stop and take a moment--

Because you don't film this. So it's not.

No, it's not filmed.

OK. You will use a tape.

I'm using a tape, yes. I've already started, as a matter of fact.

Will I get a copy of the tape?

Yes, if you would like.

Good.

Sure.

Right.

Great. My name's Margaret. You know that, right?

Yes.

OK. And it's the 18th. OK. Now, I want to make sure that I have all the right information about you. Your last name is Devinki. Your first name is Maria.

Maria.

Middle name or maiden name? Do you have a maiden name?

Braun.

Braun. A-U-N?

U-N.

OK. And your present street address? OK, right. And your home phone number? And do you have a work phone? Do you have a second address, maybe a summer address?

I have a second address.

Oh, you do, OK. What's the city? OK. Great. Occupation?

Self-employed.

OK. And you would categorize yourself as a survivor, is that right?

Yes.

OK. I hope they know I'm not going to answer that.

It stop one time or another.

And you are Jewish?

Yes.

And you're not a handicapped Jehovah's Witness. I guess none of the other ones apply. Have you ever been interviewed before--

Yes.

--as a survivor? Was your testimony ever recorded?

You mean, listen by somebody?

Tape recorded or was it ever taped?

It's on a tape.

Oh, so it has been taped before--

Yes.

--when you were interviewed before.

Yes.

And where was that?

Kansas City.

OK. Got it. When was that about?

It's not a long time ago. Could be September 30 or something, the ending on September.

This year?

This year, just recent. That's why I'm here. Otherwise, I wouldn't be here. I didn't want to do this. My son insist on it. And since we work in Kansas City and it's the Midwest Center Educational on Holocaust Museum. And I'm a part of it. So I had to give them my story. And that's why. I felt this long, I already talked about it. It's easier. Comes out easy.

Really? And you never talked about it before?

No.

So you are associated with the Midwest Center?

Yes. I'm vice president.

Any other survivor groups that you're associated with?

No, New American Club.

New American Club?

Yes. Otherwise, all our other organizations, there is American organizations. I don't know how would you-- I don't believe this has to do anything with the survivors, like Hadassah Mizrahi or Federation and Jewish-- whatever. It's quite a number I'm in it.

But it's not officially a survivor group. OK. So you don't speak publicly about your experiences?

No.

Are you already in the Benjamin and Vladka Meed Registry of Survivors? It's a registry.

Yeah, in Washington.

I believe it's national, the Jewish Holocaust survivors. Would you like to be included in that?

Yes.

OK.

I know, I receive every little literature is available in United States. So I don't know. I might be.

So you might be already there without even knowing it.

Might be.

You probably are.

Matter of fact, I show you, before I left, it's nonsense, but I took it with me because my daughter lives here. They was here last time on a trip. And I was here [NOISE, FUMBLING WITH MATERIALS] And the last time we was here, we were here at this thing. Just sit in the group here. And I said, I have paper with me to show my daughter. Really, I lost it.

Is it a picture of your group? No. Is this it? Here's a group.

That you can see it. See, that's my son.

Oh, great.

And that's my picture. It's me.

There you are. Oh, that's wonderful. And that's here? Or that's in your Kansas City thing?

Oh, no, that's here in Washington.

Terrific.

And we brought a group of 28 people, the mayor from the city. You see. Oh, you reading this. This whole was not.

A delegation of business and community leaders from the Kansas City area, including Mayor Emanuel Cleaver. Which one is he, right on the end? Great. And then there was a dinner here as well?

Yes. Oh, we had a couple of days very much entertained and being by more stuff, and got to be among us.

Oh, yeah. Oh, that's wonderful. That was great. I bet your daughter appreciated seeing that.

Yes. I said, I have to take this too.

Yeah, that's great. So they send you that to keep you updated as well.

Yes, mm-hmm.

Well, you are active. So you've already signed a release. And so I assume that this can be used for research purposes. That's OK. Right. So that's the formalities.

Nothing there that cannot be used for anything. It's just I didn't-- I was not ready, let's say this way, to even come out and let my children be aware. I always give them my advice of life. And I'm teaching them what can happen to people, how people live, before there, and so, so, so far, back and forth.

But I never tell them that that much, what I put in their mind, it's because what I went personally. Because sometime, they wouldn't take it as-- they would say, oh, you're so prejudiced because you went through this. But that's not necessarily true. It can happen. It just happened. But that was taken from me that I'm a strict mother. And I'm expecting. I'm telling them. And I'm advising them. And they took my for granted.

So maybe I had the wrong philosophy. Maybe I dealt with them a different way. But now, it's not too late. I have grandchildren then age where whatever-- they feel they already raised my way. So it's a two-way. We can see it both ways. But it's not necessarily true, like I say, that I was so right with how I handle it. But I didn't lost anything. My kids are very well aware of what life has to offer. And they're involved--

Even without--

--in a lot of things.

--yeah, knowing that.

You can see my son.

Yeah, he's doing well.

He's a lawyer.

Yeah, for sure.

He's doing pretty good. He's involved in a lot of things had to do with Judaism, and life, and other. He's trying to think of more than one things only.

And I'm sure that's as a result of how you've raised him. So was there anything in particular that made you, besides his encouragement, that made you come forward and start talking?

No. I lost my husband.

I see.

15 nights ago.

That's quite recently.

Yes.

I'm sorry.

Oh, that was basically something I felt is more to it. Why keep this in my mind, all what I went through, what he went through, and how we survived, and what our life offered us? And God was good to us. We had something to be thankful.

And we want to teach the world to know that life is not-- nothing is forever. And there is more to it. We cannot treat each other as we think we would like to. We have to treat him what's right. And gradually, like they say, if you put bread on the water, comes back.

That's true. Did you talk to each other, you and your husband, about your experiences?

Yes, we did. We always had conversations in a different way, just saying, now, listen, you see, after all, we thought, it's not worth it. We shouldn't fight for it. It's just such a miserable, uncomfortable life. It's so embarrassing to live that kind of life. Why fight? Why? Then we come-- our answer was on our conversations after was worth it. True, we lost a lot. True, we went through a lot. But the one we lost, we're here to talk for them.

That's true.

They died in vain. And we have to protect them and talk about them.

That's why it's important to make a testimony. I agree. I agree.

So your date of birth, when were you born?

June 1, 1920.

January.

June, June.

Oh, June, 1920. And where were you born?

I was born in Hanover.

In Germany?

Germany.

And your name at birth was Maria Braun?

Braun.

And were there any other names that you used between 1933 and '45? Some people changed their names if they went into hiding or anything. No? Did you grow up in Hanover?

No.

No? Where did you grow up?

Wodzislav.

In Poland?

You know how to spell this.

I don't. Wish I did.

That's OK. Give me a pencil. I have to. There's going to be more names than this.

Let's go.

Let's have a little.

Right there. My father would be able to spell it. He speaks Polish.

You read this as a T. And that's not a T.

It's like a wuh, right? My name in Polish is Malgorzata. And it's got one of those in it. So that's in Poland. And that's the only town? Did you move at any point?

No, I was in Sosnowiec too, another city.

Can you spell that one too? Are they in Central Poland? Thank you.

You will see on the glass windows those name.

Those names. And now, I'm just going to ask you some questions about your life as a child before the war. What was the occupation of your parents?

My father was in World War II. Their family was five brothers. He was the oldest one. And as a rule, in a very religious family, they cannot take more than one son to the army. And he was the oldest one. So he went to the World War I. He was in the army.

In World War I?

Yes. He was captured as a prisoner. He was also hurt by some kind of bombing. His left hand was ruined, two fingers was cut off by whatever. And he had a mark on his back head. Or was it through-- all through and through, but it was pretty severe. Matter of fact, he was there for two years, in the Russian. And there, he was captured by the Russian.

I see.

And he was there for two years. After he came back from there, he married in that little city of Wodislaw. And from there, they moved to Hanover. And that's where I was born, Hanover. Of course, being involved in such a situation, the Polish government assigned, like here, we have the veterans, what they get some kind of a benefits, the Polish government give them also some kind of a benefits.

And his benefit was like-- he had permission or legalized certain things what was not permitted to be sold in every store, like liquor, cigarettes, salt, sugar, tea, coffee. This was items-- of course, to ask you now, that's nothing. But in those years, we talking about 50-some years back, especially in a small city, that was big demand. And it was very difficult to get. He had a pension too. He probably was pretty hurt and pretty much damaged since they gave him all the privileges.

So from the army.

Yes. But the point is-- so my mother-- and he was a religious person, coming from a very religious home. So those people conducted more religion than cared about business. And my mother took over that business. And she operate the store with all those imports. All those things has to come in from Germany, from Czechoslovakia, from Italy to Poland. Poland had most of them, more like wheat, potatoes, and other sources of food. But all those luxury things was coming from--

Different places.

--different countries. And we had the privilege of having a open business for all those things. So that was our business. We lived very comfortable with it. My mother was a good businesswoman. She was operating all those things.

We lived in a very good neighborhood in that city. We had a good clientele. Matter of fact, the majority of our clientele was not even Jewish people because we didn't live in an area where too many Jews was living. This was like the higher class of neighborhood. And we operate that business for years.

And we was three children-- two brothers and me. We all went to school. We all graduate from-- of course, in Poland was seventh grade. After seven grade, you graduate. And by that time, you was 14 years old because you start when you're seven. And after graduation, I went back to gymnasium. I had two years of gymnasium.

I couldn't go to much farther because the time got where start everything in Germany. And the rules and regulations start getting pretty bad for Jews. Even in '36, '37, we didn't feel that much. But there was already a lot of things going on in Germany with the Crystal Night and other things. And news was coming, this Hitler took over the country. And it start getting very difficult for Jewish people, for particular business people, professional people, whatever.

Even though you didn't live in a neighborhood where there were primarily Jewish people living?

Doesn't make any difference.

Didn't matter.

You see. Frankly, I tell you, if this is taped what I'm saying, I cannot say what I want to say.

Really?

No, that would be a joke what I want to say. And I hate to put a joke in some tape like this. When you say you live in that neighborhood. So to answer for this, well, on the very end, I tell you that answer.

OK. OK.

I don't know where I am now. Anyway, so my school stopped. I went two years to gymnasium. I had one more year to finish and I could be a mathematic teacher. I went for math. But not allowing any more Jews to attend school, types of school, they cut it off, certain cities and certain schools. So I had to do something else. I stepped in and helped my mother to operate the business. And I was working with her. And so is mine brothers.

One of my brothers was working as a bookkeeper in a little factory, what you call it, the steel, iron, stuff like this for building suppliers. He actually didn't finish. He had the same problem. He couldn't finish everything. But he finished business school. So they hired him for this. So he worked there. And I worked with my mother. And my youngest brother was 14-- 13-14. The war broke out, he was 14 years old.

Were you the oldest?

No. My brother was the oldest,

You're in the middle?

And I'm the middle, yes. After, we heard the bad news. But there was nothing specific was-- didn't have any televisions or that type of information we have now, that much newspaper, news medias, and everything goes with it. We had a radio. Every once in a while, there was a broadcast. But we just could hear what they want us to hear. We couldn't have the true story.

So the fact is that we lived at the idea oh, it will pass. It's just some kind of a bad situation right now. And it will go back to history. If somebody is educated, happen to so, and so, and so, and so in all through life, all through thousands of years. But didn't pass so easy. 1939, September 1, German Army stepped in our city.

In your city.

Took over the city. And from that day on, we seen killing, we seen unusually things what we never expected or lived through, I mean, as far as I can say. I never known a person kills a person. But life was taken by God. This is something if you get older, and you get sick, you die. I was too young to understand this. You take a gun. And we didn't know too much about guns. We know this, you go to the army, you get a gun. But living in a city was peaceful. Life was just different, totally-- maybe now, it's a little different too than my vision is. But 50 years ago was totally different.

Right, right. So you were 19?

I was 19 years old.

Did you notice-- was there any clue before? Were there any antisemitism or anything that gave you a clue about what the Germans were doing before they came?

Like I say, we heard what they want us to hear. They didn't tell us they killing people. They didn't tell us they sending out anybody to camps. There was just stories going around. Of course, the Polish people was not very kind to us--

They weren't?

--in that time. No. There was hope-- not exactly, if I want to say, it's not exactly all the Polish people. You had a group of Volksdeutsch. And if you know what that mean, if you had a name, like my name is Braun, so I could be German. OK? If you married somebody from the Germans people and you're half a German or whatever, then you live in Poland, then you are Volksdeutsch, not a full Deutsch. And those people was taken a lot advantage. That was stupid. There was not too many.

And of course, in the city I lived, I have to say, it's farm towns. It's not too many educated people, not too many intelligent to understand that's a war, and we all going suffer, and it's going to be a lot of tragedy going on. But it's an opportunity. They have a store, we take everything away from them. They have jewelry, we take everything. If they're bankers, whatever the case would be. And that was going on.

And through math school, it was the same thing. There were students, and even in my school where I used to go, where there was doing a lot of uncomfortable things for the Jewish kids. They could take a match put onto your coat. Was a joke, but they did this to a Jewish girl.

To the Jewish. And the school where you went, it was an assimilated school? It wasn't particular?

No, I went to a school where it was Jews and non-Jews. I went to another school, it was a Hebrew school.

I see.

But that was all through my years since, five years, from five to 17 years. And I was graduating to the highest whatever it's available. That school was just for Hebrew, nothing to do with any public-class schooling.

And in the public school, who were your friends, would you say?

I had quite a lot of non-Jewish friends.

Did you?



Matter of fact, I was very popular in school. I was a good student, that's number one. And I was well-dressed. And that means a lot, even now.

It sure does.

And we lived in a neighborhood where I had most of non-Jewish friends. We was doing our homework in my house. We lived in pretty good-sized house. All the girls was coming to my house. And I was the popular one, do the mathematics for them, the painting--

Sure. You wanted to be a math teacher, right.

--all those things, I was good in it. So I had a lot of friends. Fact is that just short time, everything changed. When Hitler come in, they start-- of course, he come in in '39. And right there and then start a little uncomfortable situation where main street was separated, trying to block off the windows for those people that lived on main street, if they Jewish families. They have no view to the front. They have to have a view to the back.

And question start getting around in the neighborhood. Oh, you see what's done it to So and so? What done it to So and so? And children are children. What they understand? They say, uh-oh, something wrong with those people. They must be sick. They must be something. They didn't want to have a part of it until we find out, all of us, the young and old, is no. It's not a easy thing. It's going to be more serious than that. By then was too late. Course it was going on for months. And later on, they start taking us out to work, my two brothers and me. They didn't use my father or my mother in '39, just used the children.

We was working on the railroads. We was working on streets. Like for example, here they have paved streets. In that part of the city, they had stones, big stones. And underneath, sand, they throw in the stone, just make a street from it. And natural, this was good to take a bunch of kids like us. The woman was throwing the sand. And the man was putting in the stone. Of course, didn't pay us. And we had to be there 9 o'clock, 8 o'clock in the morning. We had to group all on some kind of a place.

How did they tell you that you--

They go from house to house.

They go from house to house.

It was the Polish police.

It was the Polish police?

For sure. They had to cooperate with the German, otherwise they would then be killed. And when take over the country, then nobody has the power but them. And the one want to live. And the one is really-- some was cooperating for one reason, they want to exist. And the other was cooperating to make money or to take advantage on it. And what a lot of did take advantage on it.

And of course, they pay the penalty later. That's another story. So from one things to another, when they was through with one job, they looked for another, for whatever it was necessary to do in that city. And they sent us away on the railroad. And we was working on-- there was not far from us a station, about six miles from the city.

Did you live at home while you were?

No, we had to go there every morning to work and come back in the evening. Later on, when start getting a little bit more serious, they kept my brothers there, the two brothers. And they released me. And that was already in '40, in middle '40. And cities start getting a little more crowded and shortage of food. We had problems. People have to bake their own bread because you couldn't buy too much because the army used a lot.

And natural, then it didn't worry about anybody else but for them to be protected. And some of them shifted, even, took stuff away. Because they didn't have to pay anything if they went to a bakery or went to any place else. They didn't have to pay nothing. For example, one good day, two of those Gestapos come in to our store. And they cleaned up everything. And they had a truck in front of it, throwed everything on the truck.

Everything?

Yes. And I was stupid enough to stay in front of my mother. And my mother was taking away some-- everything was in bulk, not in packages-- was take off on the bulk a little bit tea, coffee, chocolate, whatever things. And he said, no, no, she cannot do this. [GERMAN]. I asked him, why? She needs it. She has three children to feed.

And he took a strap and got on my face back and forth. I had stripes here for a month, didn't heal. And he said, you'll-- and the people was telling me later. I was lucky. He could have killed me because he did this in other occasions. So was no question about it. The life was unsecured and no justice. You couldn't ask anybody why you do-- he's doing this to me, what I've done is wrong. I'm a normal person like everybody else.

They took everything you had. How did you survive?

That's the second question. We-- like I say, we was-- that's what we had-- [AUDIO OUT].

We were still connected with farmers and money. Some money, we had. Everything what we had on paper, all, we lost because momentarily, Germans took over that. It's like stocks and bond, government things, that's was PKO. And that was my-- my father was receiving for his pension went straight to PKO. And of course, this was momentarily, they claimed it, this-- nobody, no Jewish people can take out any more money from there.

But we was secured by all type of what everybody else-- if you wealthy, you have a little bit more clothes than somebody else, if you have some jewelry, some money in the house. In the old country, not everybody put money in the bank. You kept something of a security. That for a while was-- we lived. We could buy food from the farmers. We could exchange for goods what we still had.

Till got from one to another they decided that we have to separate the Jews from the Gentiles and make the ghetto, that city. Everybody has to move in a few blocks, circle, or wherever that is, give up their belonging and the houses. We had a big house, we had to move in in the quarters where our janitor was living and give this to the Germans.

We lived there. We was seven people. We lived in the two rooms till '42, when they start [GERMAN], a commandment, [GERMAN]-- partial [GERMAN], take the young people, then take the older people, then clean up completely. We like to say-- in Germany, they would say, they're Judenrein, if you know what that means.

In 1942, September, we was contact with some people that had to meet authority, with the Polish authority. Of course, since we was in that business and a lot of those people was buying on credit, never paid us because, of course, we didn't expect it. But we had still contact with them. We talked to them. They tried to help us by virtual telling us stories. And one of those policemen was telling us, there was Jewish people was involved at that police station. They come in and told us this. That was the final [GERMAN].

And everybody start to looking where to get away. In that time, my father was already taken away. And he sent to Treblinka. I didn't know where he was sent. We just know they took him away. When they took him away, we thought he is in a working camp. He might stayed in a working camp for a while. But we had no contact. There was no something you can write a letter to each other, whatever.

Yeah. You thought he would come back, right?

Yes. My two brothers was close enough, six miles away. So they was working on that station. By that time, before the [GERMAN] come up, they come in and took them, and took us, me, and send us to Skarzysko. Skarzysko's a city. We

had camps there, but not death camps, working camps. There was making ammunition for the army. And we last over there a short while.

And I tell you the story how we come out from there. But that's-- it's confusing because I don't follow up. When that happened, that contact told us what's going happen, my husband come into the railroad, and I was working. And we was not married yet. And he told me, so and so going happen. And they're going send everybody away to some kind of a camps where we're not going to see each other. We didn't know death camps. We know camps.

He says, but I was told, the young couples have a chance. The older couples will go there. But young singles, they're separated. And you don't know where you are. And young couples have a chance because they need workers, healthy workers. If we get married, we have a better chance to survive. And we could watch for each other. I said, it's not a bad idea. But it's not a time to get married. And my father is not here any longer. I don't even know where he is. My brothers are here. Who is going to marry us? What kind of marriage you expect? He says, who cares? It's not a time to worry about anything extreme.

Had you known him?

But just to be-- oh, we know each other for years.

Yeah. Were you in school together?

Yes. Yeah, no, he was older. He was too in school. He was seven years older than I was. But he was watching me since I was a little girl, since I was going to public school, high school, never placed us. We was very close friend. As he's older young man, and I was too young, so we just flirted, but nothing serious.

What did he do?

They had a textile business. They were very wealthy people, had a big operation in that city. And of course, it happened to them the same things. They come in and cleaned up all the warehouses, and the retail store, and everything else. But again, like I say, that was the last things everybody worried. We had less clothes or we'll have less food, as long they'll leave us alone. Because for some reason or other, we didn't experience anything like this.

Sure.

And we was young. 19 years-- I have granddaughter of 19 years. And I know, she wouldn't dream, what do I do in a time like this? I was smarter then than she's smart now. The whole things is not clicking because I'm going from one to another. I'm telling you a story.

That's OK. I wanted to know--

It's just like sometimes, read a book, and it just doesn't pile up.

No, it's actually-- I mean, I'm hearing it for the first time. So it makes sense to me. I wanted to ask you about the two years that you lived in a small quarters with seven people. That was you and your mother?

Me, my mother, my father, and the two brothers, my two brothers, and my mother's sister, and a aunt. Because they all lived in that-- we had a very, very big house of two blocks. And it's not just ours, was left by a grandfather. In the old country, when they was building something, a family structure was built like a castle for the whole family.

And there was my mother's sisters, brothers, uncles-- everybody has his own quarters, like five rooms, seven rooms, whatever the size of the family. And they took all this away. My aunt was a widow. She was 83. And this-- she has a sister. She was not-- she was married and lost her husband. So we all shared this two room, all seven of us. But that's was not the worst. We shared something else too in our life.

So that was two years?

Two years, yes. Yes. We lived there. And then when the [GERMAN] come out, there was like-- no. We got married. I'm going back.

Oh, so you did get-- you got married, you said, yes.

We come back to the city. It was, like I'm saying, six or seven miles away from the railroad. We come back to the city. And there was-- we found a few of our friends our age was working with us in that group of young people. And we discussed this with them.

And they decided, yes, it's a good idea. And four couples of us went to a specific place where they have services in the evening for somebody to marry us because we didn't have the parents to do anything for us. And there has to be somebody to give us some kind of authority to be married. When we had that place, there was not too many Jewish people what they have that authority. The only one has authority if he had to rule, he could be a rabbi, if you understand what this is. There was one of those Jews was one of my uncle. He was in that group of 10. And he married all four of us, four couples. Of course, from the four couples, I'm the only one alive.

Really?

Yes. They all went. And after we was married, we was called one good day. I come in. A night before, we heard in the city, there's going to happen tomorrow, or next day, or whatever. And everybody, we didn't hide because there was no place to hide. And if to hide, we have to be prepared. Somebody has to give us some kind of places or whatever.

And early, 7 o'clock in the morning-- the night before we heard about, we thought it's going drag for a week or so. 7-8 o'clock in the morning, they knocked on the door. My grandfather was living in the same house also with his wife. He was 83 or 84 also in age. Knocked on his door, and they come out, and she didn't see. She was already age when she didn't see, was blind. She was holding him by his arm because she didn't see where she's walking.

They're screaming, yelling, get out, get out, get out. And she holds him by his arm, not even dressed. And one of this Gestapos knocked her over her head with some kind of-- or was it a gun or was it some kind of instrument that was pretty serious. And she fall on the floor. And he grabbed him. The old man that size, because all the people shrink, and throw them outside-- was a truck sitting right by the street-- on that truck. How long he last, it's just God's know. Could be an hour. Could be-- who knows. But they killed him.

Anyway, he was going. And then they're going from house to house. Of course, they come to us. We willingly go out, walk up. And they took us on-- all the people went right away away on trucks. Younger people, they took us on a Platz, like they called a Plaza, a spacious place, where they can put everybody out, and say, left, right, left, right, left, right. We didn't know who is the left and who is the right. But one went to camp. One went to Auschwitz or any other, according to the look, according to whatever they seeing in people. Me and my husband was safe.

But we know it's not going to help. A few weeks, or months, or whatever after, we walk. And our health will come down. And we're not going to be capable to go on with whatever or whatever. Who can predict the way there? We started looking for a way. Everything-- we have times like, you know, a second, a minute, a minute, and a second. That's not anymore.

I had a friend, a non-Jewish friend. He was also in the Polish Army as a main person army man. And he was working in the underground in the Polish Army. What was his reason, I don't know. He was trying to save us. He came to me before. And he asked me, if time gets so serious, you want me to find a saving place-- before I got married-- a place where to hide you? And in that time, I was not serious enough to say yes or no.

But when that happened, I contacted. And I says, you remember what you told me? He says, OK. It's still open. We take you on a farm, he and a teacher in school. And on that farm, I already talked to the farmer, he said, because I talked to him that time when I approached you. And he's willing to do this for so and so much a month money.

He was willing to do it for money?

Oh, sure. What do you think this all-- so would be? [AUDIO OUT] Some other things left what could be exchanged in money. Of course, nobody know how long this will last. We was hoping maybe three months, maybe six months. And nobody predicted a five-year history. But the point is they picked us up. All right, it's the whole story-- in Skarzysko, when my brothers was in Skarzysko. And I-- no, after this, we went to Skarzysko. I didn't know. I'm confused with the marriage business. I should have left this alone.

When you got married, that was in '40?

In '42.

In '42.

Yes.

And you had lived from 1940--

September 20, 1942, I was married.

September 20, 1942. And so you-- between '40 and '42 is when you lived with your family in the very close quarters?

Yes. We didn't live there. We just come back to sleep or whenever.

All the while, when you were working on the railroad.

We was working, yes, back and forth.

And then you talked to him in '42?

Yes.

And you got married with the four-- all the four by your uncle.

Well, we was transferred to Skarzysko after this, all of us, the group with married and not married. But we contacted this we need a hiding place. The situation is like this.

How did you contact him?

How? There was visiting. There was still people coming to the-- there was workers, Jews and non-Jews. It was not just Jews because the Jews was the slavery. And the non-Jews was the one that supervised. They watched over us. It's not. The Germans couldn't spread around the army between such a nonsense working on the railroad while on this thing. So they used the Polish people, the one they assigned it-- like I said, a half-German, or even a Polish policeman, or whatever.

And when we come, we had contact. I know. We know quite a lot of people. We lived in that city for a long time. And my husband had a wealthy family with a lot of business. And if you do business with people, they like you or not, there's still some kind of connection. My brother approached, when we was in Skarzysko, the youngest one, 15 years old, approached one of those Wachman, whoever he was, Gestapo or somebody, that he gave him all his clothes.

He was dressed up in boots. And that was already in the fall-- and a jacket and everything in it because he had gold pieces in the boots hid away. We all put some jewelry in places that we can dispose it and be able to get out some bread money for. And he said, I give you my boots. I give you my clothes. And give me a uniform. And take me to the

station.

And that man falls for it. He opened the boot. And he find out it's gold pieces. And he falled for it. He could have killed him. But It's a God's will for him not to kill him because he could have all that things, and kill him, and forget about it. He took all those things, and took him, took us, all three of us, to a station, a railroad station.

And we all arrived in that city where we supposed to go to hiding. And that man was waiting for us on the station and picked us up with a wagon of hay. And we all crawled in and went to that place, to that farmer. We digged a hole in the barn. They had those barns for cattles, for pigs, or whatever.

We digged a hole in the barn, six foot deep, 10 foot square, and covered this up in boards, and covered the boards with hay, with straw, with whatever, just pretend it's a part of the barn. And little by little, that gentleman, that Gentile brought in my mother. My mother was in hiding already. He hid.

Oh, I see.

And brought in my husband and my husband's sister. So we was a total of six.

OK. So then you and?

My mother.

Your mother, your husband.

My husband, the two brothers.

The two brothers, OK.

And my husband's sister.

The four of you-- or the six of you in this hall.

In that hall. That was not the end of it. We even brought in-- my sister lost two children. But we lost it in a short time. They were just there a few months, a couple of months. But he tried to save them. They didn't succeed. There were too young. And they went out for things. And they got killed. One was nine, one was 11. But we was trying in that. We didn't sleep, laying flat, but sit. Everybody was sitting in that clothes, whatever clothes we still had. We stayed in that bunker for months.

How did you eat?

Was very difficult.

She brought-- this I'm going tell. It was very difficult with food. Because if the lady, the farmer's lady, was in a good mood, she cooked, she brought down potatoes and baked a bread. This was good enough. So then we had potatoes, we had bread, we had water, we can live. But something would just didn't work very well in her household, she took advantage on us. We could sit two and three days without food, without anything.

The only advantage we had, in the middle of the night, we went up and we could pull out from the barn, they have those spaces for the animals where they throwing potatoes, cooked potatoes for them.

Oh, a trough, trough, right.

And from this, the leftovers. We took it down. And that was the-- and if we need a drink water, something, was a well outside. You had to go down. And this was for-- to clean us to wash up too. Because in daytime, we didn't have that

opportunity. So I had to wait midnight, when everybody, the farm was quiet asleep. We went out, one at a time, and washed ourself, cleaned up to a point I don't want even remember how. Of course, we got sick there. I had all type of sickness.

I was going to say, did you get sick, yeah.

And my mother was sick. We didn't even think we will survive. There was not even-- we didn't care, frankly. I, personally-- I cannot speak for everybody. I personally didn't care. I was just doing a favor the rest of them that I'm with him. That's my opinion.

But to my opinion was big deal. Who needs that kind of life? Being a princess, having everything in home, and being dressed, and being popular, and being somebody, and no time, nobody even cares, all my friends, they don't even want to talk to me. I'm just like a disease. So who cares to live in a time like this? It's even embarrassing. You can be the most beautiful child. But you're still a child, you think like a child.

The fact is myself, I didn't know what's commit suicides. I know what you do not to live. But I didn't care. I say, whatever happen to me, if they take me out, they kill me, so they kill me. I know how the feeling of killing, but just listening to it, I agree to be the victim. And what can I say? Time went by. After quite some time, the man was getting wealthier and wealthier, the farmer, by paying him so much money each month.

Who paid him?

The outsider, the gentleman outside what find us the place give him a ultimatum.

So from your friend? The one that--

He told them before he boarded us in. He said, listen, I know a lot of farmers taking this. And after a few months, they get tired of it. And they kill them, take away everything they had. They have nothing. Everything they had, I have. And I'm the witness. If anything happen to them, same thing will happen to you.

Oh, he said that to the farmer.

Yes. And on those agreement, he took us in. So we had some security. We know as long Juzik is not going be tired of us, we will live, unless we die from diseases or whatever. And of course, they used to come on the farm for food, the Gestapo, the German Army used to come to every farmer, take out a pig, a cow, the poultry, eggs, whatever. This was common.

Every time they come in, three or four of them with a truck, they was going around with rifles and digging, trying to-- in the ground, see, oh, it's soft. If it's soft, somebody's hiding. And the minute they come in, they ask him, you have Judens here? Or do you have Jews? Say, no. But that was already common. There are a lot of people in hiding.

Sure.

One Sunday, he comes home. And he says, he want to talk to us. He knocks on the things, the evening. What is it? His name was Wladek. What is it? He said, we heard in church stories that the rumors go around on the farm that we have Jews. And I ask him, I says, what makes you think they're serious.

He says, because I told them I'm going build a house. And they say, how can you build a house if you don't have Jews there to pay you for it? Because farmers were poor people. They had a little house from straw and whatever. He said, he's going to build a brick house. And he's bragging about. And his wife is going to the city, buying better clothes than she used to wear. Natural, things like this give you some suspicious. So we decided, that's-- and that was already in '44.

'44?

Yes. We decided, if that's going-- if he already told us this, it's not going take very long. Or he himself can call the police and tell them, I have Jews here-- not by will, they just come in. And they hide. And I discovered they're there and there, or tell them, they coming to rob me, or anything, what to rob even potatoes is a robbery. So we decide, it's not going work. We have to see-- to find another place. And my man, same man--

Your friend?

--come out because he used to come out every once in a while, talk to us. Find out, he picked days because he was in the city. He know what days in the week the Gestapo comes in, not every day they were there. The army was there, but the one in the black uniforms, they just come in for visits, like taking everything out from everybody or killing somebody. So he chose those days what's safer for him to visit us.

And we told him this story. It's not going work. And he said, OK. I have another place. The guy's a very poor farmer. But I told him, I expect, one day, it's going happen. He was very smart businessman. He was in business. They had a lot of farms.

But he himself was in the automobile business, like the buses we have going back and forth. He had those buses, that man. He was with people. He was not just a person what don't understand the life. He could see what is go on. And he was, like they say, a patriot. In Polish, they say, he was a real patriot. He believed that one of those days, we get rid of the Germans, and Poland is going to be Poland, like it used to be.

And to him, was a challenge that he had the opportunity to save lives, of the Jews, or non-Jews, or somebody. That's my opinion because why would he? He didn't got any money. We just reward him with gifts later. But he had no benefit as far as financial. Everything what we left with him, he used for--

For you.

--that purpose. Matter of fact, he was short. When he took us over to the other farmer, he told him, I don't have any more money to pay you. But they had pretty nice homes from both side of the family. If they survive, you will have something. If they don't survive, I will see to it as you get all these things what that belongs to them. So the farmer falled for this too. After all, that's not enough.

They took a chance. Frankly, they took a chance for their life too. Not that we had heaven there, but the same token, didn't have to do this either. A lot of people didn't want to do this. When he come back and he told us that he make the arrangement that other guy, but it's a good walking distance. Was quite a few miles, for seven, eight miles out. But I remember was farm, farm, farms.

Monday, we have, in our city, a exchange food, like a market, where the farmers come with food, with everything to the city, exchange for clothes, for equipment to work on the farm, for appliances, for stuff like this.