

--96, tape one of three. Sia, tell me your name at birth, the place you were born, the date of your birth.

Sia Hertsberg, born Izrailewitsch. I was born in Riga, Latvia on June 8, 1927.

Did you have any other names that you are known by in your life? And tell me a little bit about your family life.

No, I never had different names. My family lived in Riga, Latvia. And I had a little sister. And we lived four of us-- my mother, my father, my little sister, and myself. My little sister was born in 1934, October 3rd. And we lived in Riga. We were maybe a little above middle class.

My father had a fur coat factory-- a little factory, he was producing fur coats. He was also involved in selling dried mushrooms to United States. He was drying them in Riga and putting them on strings, and then exporting them to United States. That was what he was doing for a living.

And my mother was a housewife. She raised myself and my little sister. And she also helped my father with the books.

The language we were using in our family was German. And the school I attended was in German language. It was a Jewish school, but in German language. And I was-- in the school I had friends, and all my life was like the life of all children that time.

I had some hobbies. My hobby was Shirley Temple. I had all her pictures. The whole room was with pictures of Shirley Temple. I watched all her movies. And there was also paper dolls with clothes, and that was Shirley Temple with her clothes. I was her dressing and undressing, and that was my hobby.

I was also playing very good piano. I was in Dr. Majevskis' piano school until the Russians came in-- until the Russians occupied it till 1940. I finished the fifth grade, and I also was in the music school. I also was in the ballet school. I was learning to ballet dances. And the life was going on, and I never saw thought that suddenly we would be occupied by the Russians, which happened in 1940 in the summer.

And so we were occupied by the Russians. They took everything what we had. The fur coat factory away, and the money we had, everything was taken away. And it was a different life. We had to start everything in the Russian language, which I didn't know well. And I couldn't write and read it all, because I could write and read only in German and in Latvian.

My age was then 13. And my little sister was then six years old. So it was a terrible one year life, because the Russians were after my father. And we were supposed to be sent to Siberia.

Why were the Russians after your father?

Because they thought we were rich. I didn't think that we were very rich, but in that time I didn't think that. Seems that we were a little bit over the middle class, but we were rich enough to be sent in Siberia.

And my father had a friend who-- not a friend, it was a customer of his. And he called us at night. He was a communist, which we didn't know, because we hated the communists.

But my mother did him a favor. He brought once a case, a little suitcase, and he told if he can leave it for a few hours. And my mother tell sure you can, and it stayed in our apartment for a few days. And there was a communist proclamation papers. And she didn't know.

So when the Russians came in he was a big shot. He was a chief of the prison. And so he wanted to do also us a favor. So he did. He called at night, at 2:00 at night, and told my father that they are coming to take all our family to send us out to Siberia.

So my father just left the house. And he couldn't even make the stairs down because they were coming from downstairs. And my father made it up. And they came in, and we told them my father left, and we don't know where he left. He probably went to see his father in another city. So they left some soldiers with us to see that we shouldn't walk away, my mother, my little sister, and myself.

And it was like for five, six days. And then my father couldn't stand it. And he came and showed up. And when he showed up they told pack your suitcases, everybody can have one suitcase. And come you with us. So they took us to the police station, which was not far from us. And--

Where were the soldiers staying? In your apartment?

Yes, they were standing in our-- staying within our apartment. Day night, and they were changing. And they didn't let us out. It was like for five or six days, and then my father showed up. And then they took us to the police station.

And we were supposed to be sent to Siberia, but it was too late. The war started out with Hitler. So they just all left and we were found ourself with two, three suitcases, and we came back home. And then in a few days-- in two days we were occupied by the Germans.

And then again, the same night when we came back from the police, this same guy who called us and told that he wanted to do us one favor, he thought he can do us another favor. He will give us a car, and we could go to Russia back and to run away from Hitler.

Tell me something, please, about the Jewish life in Riga before the Russian occupation?

Oh, it was very decent, the Jewish life. And you see there was a Jewish theater. There was a Jewish club. My parents belonged to the Jewish club. And there was Jewish schools with different languages, and with German language, with Jewish language, with Hebrew language. So you could choose whatever you want.

And there were synagogues, many of them, in Riga. We belonged to one, and my parents belonged to one. We were a religious family. Not very religious, but religious. We didn't keep kosher, but we didn't eat pork.

And so it was really-- it was our house was for Pesach was always prepared, and it was always, always everything kosher for Pesach. It was a Rosh Hashanah, it was Yom Kippur observed, and I was taking lessons in Hebrew language to prepare me for the bat mitzvah. But this time it was more for the boys' bar mitzvah.

But anyway, I had the Rabbi Katz who was teaching me. I remember him. And I was teach to read in Hebrew. I was also taking English lessons.

And so there was a lot of Gentile people who were our friends. Most of our friends were Jewish people, but there was also Gentile people who were our friends, good friends, very good friends to the family. And they also helped us out in the time of the Nazis.

And so we observed the Jewish traditions. I wouldn't say that my father was much involved in politics, but we usually every day there came we had the newspaper. And we were reading-- my parents were reading, and they were always giving donations. They were giving donations to the Jewish community. And so we-- I don't remember my father to be very much involved in politics.

Was there any anti-Semitism in the community that you experienced or remember?

I say it was. You could hear from some people, like you are a Jew. But we could answer them and tell them you no have to answer them. But there was not a day we were punished or some kind-- we couldn't do whatever we wanted. We could do-- go in wherever we want and we could go in all stores. There was no place that they wouldn't let Jewish people in.

Did you have fights because you were Jewish? Or did any of the boys have fights?

Sometimes you could-- you know, there was a-- in our house there was a boy who once told me that you are zhyd, that means Jew. But so I told the Jew is my pride. And I don't care about that. But it was not really much of that. I didn't feel it at all.

Tell me when you-- what you experienced with anti-Semitism when the Russians came? Did you experience it specifically as anti-Semitism, or as a power, your money?

It was power more. I didn't expect the anti-Semitism at all. The Russians-- it was the opposite way. The Russian told us there is no difference, no discrimination between Blacks or Whites or Jews or not Jews. But they only said the Russians they were-- they poor people. They were better to the poor people, the poor people gain.

But the ones who had something, everybody lost everything was ahead. And these things that they send everybody, the Jewish people-- most of the Jewish people in Latvia they were in a good money-wise, in a good position. And there were a lot of Jewish doctors, a lot of Jewish lawyers, a lot of Jewish teachers. And everybody had some money, more or less.

And the Russians didn't want that anybody to have the money and the power. So that was more that they lost-- we lost our power, we lost everything what we had. And it was really bad.

How long did the Russian occupation actually last?

One year. Exactly one year, from 1940 to 1941 when they start the war.

Now when the Germans moved in, did you experience a change in anti-Semitism among the people you lived with? Your friends and neighbors in Riga?

You see, our friends were friendly to us. The Jewish people you don't talk about Jewish people. You talk about the Gentile people. But we had a lot of Gentile friends who were helping us to get food, and to-- because it was right away.

We couldn't use the sidewalk. We had to go in the street. Right away, in the first day, we had to put our yellow Star of David, and sew it onto our clothes.

And we couldn't go in the stores. It was forbidden for Jewish and for verboten. And so we couldn't go not to the movie theater, not at all. And we were sitting in the house, and we were waiting that they will come and arrest us.

Or the synagogue was burned down to the-- everything was burned down with the Jewish people inside. The Gogol Synagogue, which was restored like a few years ago only, it was burned down with the people inside.

They were catching Jewish people on the street and they were killing. My uncle was killed. We found him on the street, killed. He went to get some food for the family. He was killed. So it was terrible as the Germans.

But they, our friends, were still friends only that they were afraid to come to openly to come to us. It was everything hidden. They came and they brought us food, and they went to the store to buy something. We still had some money left. But very shortly after that, we were taken to the ghetto.

You say your uncle was killed on the street? What was the restriction? Were you not allowed to walk on the street at all?

We were allowed to walk on the street. But I don't know how. But he was shot in his-- with a gun in his mouth. And he was just-- when my aunt was coming to us and screaming that she saw that he went out for something, and with no reason he was shot. With no reason.

They just-- when they wanted, they just-- you see movies. You see that. They were catching people on the street and--

not that we were not supposed to go out, and we wouldn't go. But we were not supposed to use sidewalks. But he wasn't using sidewalk. He was just the shot and that's all, without reason.

And the people in the synagogue, were they killing them because they were in the synagogue? What was happening there?

You see, we were told that people were there praying. And they just got the Jews from the streets, and they were bringing and putting them in the synagogue. And then they put the flame on. That's what it was, how it was done.

Were all synagogues destroyed?

Most of them, probably. I really wouldn't say, because I really don't remember if all. There were a lot of synagogues and that was-- I'm talking about the Gogol-Shul, the Gogol Synagogue. That synagogue was burned down with the people. And I was a few years ago in Riga when it was opened again, the Gogol-Shul, and it was restored.

How did you first become aware of the Nazi presence?

Oh, that was just the Germans came in, and you could see the full streets with German. And the war started, and the Russians just went running-- running. And the Germans were coming. That was in the beginning of the war, when they occupied one state after-- one country after the other. It was occupied the all three countries, in Estonia and Latvia and Lithuania, and then they went to Russia.

Did your family have any plans to leave?

We couldn't leave, because we didn't want to go to Russia. And my mother thought that Hitler will come and it will be a ghetto for a while, and then the Hitler will leave. And it will be again Latvia like it was before the war. Maybe if we would live in Russia, who knows what would be. But maybe we would be still alive, the whole family. But so only survived me and my father. We came back. My sister and my mother were killed.

Did the Germans destroy any of your property? Anything that was left after the Russians had taken most of it, or were you allowed to live in your apartment?

We lived in our apartment about two months, and then we were put in ghetto. And in ghetto we couldn't take our furniture, so we gave it to our friends, to the Gentile friends. We tried to give it away, because if not we had to leave it in the apartment. We have just to walk out with and could take like the beds to sleep and the table with chairs. So we tried somehow to give it to our Gentile friends.

We gave my piano over to our Gentile friends, which we got back when we came after 1945. I got my piano. My piano is now in Israel with my stepmother.

Tell me what you were able to take from your home to the ghetto. And how did you get to the ghetto?

It was some kind of a carriage my father got, and he was taking some beds and a table with chairs. That's all what we took to the ghetto. And the ghetto was located not far where we lived, but it was in a neighborhood where the poorer people lived before.

And we got-- I don't remember how my father got an apartment for us. Not an apartment, a room-- one room in a four bedroom apartment-- four room apartment. There was no bedroom in it. There was rooms.

Four room apartment. We got one room, which was located from the hall to the right, right-hand first room, right-hand side. And that's very important for later when I will tell you the stories what happened to us when we came to ghetto.

And so my mother, my little sister, and myself we were in the apartment. And my father was taken to work. He was working in Gestapo in SS. And there was a workshop where they did something for the soldiers-- for the officers really,

not for soldiers. And the men were taken every morning out from the ghetto to work.

And in the evenings they were brought back from work. And my mother, my little sister, and myself we didn't work, so we stayed in our apartment. And then one day it was rumors that we will all be taken out from the ghetto and put in another place.

We didn't know where the place will be, but we should prepare ourselves. It was rumors, nobody told us officially on something, but rumors. The ghetto was always fenced, and so we couldn't get out. And it was gates. And only the people who worked outside the ghetto, they could go to work and then in the evening come back. That was how I saw my father in the evenings back.

And one day, when the rumors were that we will be taken to another place. So in the evening my father didn't show up from work. Like at 5:00 they were coming, the men didn't come from work. So my mother told that's it, probably they were already taken someplace else. So we have to prepare our backpacks and to prepare things which will be taken with us if they will take us to a different place.

We didn't know that they will take all the Jewish people from ghetto and they will shoot this night. We didn't know that. That time we prepared our backpacks. We put our toothpaste, our brush, whatever piece of soap and underwear, something to change. A piece of bread and so on.

And it was-- I remember we had a clock in the room where we lived in the apartment. And in that apartment, as I told already, there were four rooms. We were-- my mother, my little sister, myself, and my father, we were in one room. In the other room there was a family by name Vontz. It was a father who was in a wheelchair, and the mother, and a young daughter who was older than me. I was then 14 years, and she was about 18.

And then in next room there was Mr. And Mrs. Yoffe, a young couple who were just married a few years ago. And in the fourth room there was one son of the Vontz with his wife Sima, and they were also recently married. And then, in there, there was [GERMAN], a little room which is by the kitchen. And then there was another Vontz son. So the apartment was really full, crowded. In every room a family.

And so my mother-- it was-- we had a clock. And I looked up the clock, and it was 12:00. And my mother told put your pajamas and go to bed to me, to my sister. And I remember it as it happened yesterday.

I had a red pajama with white stripes. And I remember putting it on and the elastic in my pants popped. And I was asking my mother to give me a safety pin to put the elastic back in, and she told me it is late. Just put on whatever you want and just go to bed.

So I took my pants and they shouldn't fall on me. I took a safety pin and I pinned them without the elastic in the back, that they should hold tight. And we went to bed, and we fell asleep.

And then about 2:00 at night we start-- we heard voices and they were shooting outside on the stairways. It was a five story building. And then we looked out the window-- the windows were closed with a special drapes for the war. But we pulled it up and looked a little bit.

And we saw that the Latvians and the Germans are outside and were pushing the Jews. And because we were on the-- I don't remember, on fourth or fifth floor, and we could see. Because the buildings all around were very, very small buildings, one floor buildings, two floor buildings. So from the fourth floor, we could really see.

And especially from the backside, from the kitchen, we could see over the ghetto. We saw that it is something-- it is a big trouble. And we didn't know, but they were rushing the Jews out of all apartments around, and from all the little houses. So we heard the noise, and then there was knocking on our door. And somebody opened the door and the Latvians-- not Germans-- the Latvians came in.

And there came like three or four people. And I recognized one of them, that was a boy who lived in our-- he was-- I

was 14, he was probably 17. And he was now a German soldier. It was uniforms of the Aizsargi, it is a Latvian guards. And he looked at me, I looked at him, we recognized each other.

But there was a chief of them who was higher than the others. And he looked at me and he told, I like this girl, and I'm going to have her. And in the minute I understood what he meant, and I was still in my pajamas. And my little sister was also in pajamas, and my mother was-- and he just pushed my mother and my little sister out of the room and they told we have to get dressed. Doesn't matter, out, and he throws them out.

And he grabbed me by my arm, and pushed me in the room back. And he pushed me on the bed. And he was above me. And in his left arm at my right side of my head he had his gun. With the right hand-- and he hold my arm, one arm. In the right hand he was trying to pull down my pants.

And because of the safety pin my pants didn't go down. And he start to-- he wanted to get them down, and he couldn't. It was in this minute there was some shooting outside the stairs. And the boy who once lived in our house he told to him, prieksnieks, that means chief, the Jewish people are shooting. To get him out, so he just jumped and the boy told to my mother. And my mother was crawling on her knees outside and asking-- begging them that he should leave me alone.

And in that minute he told to my mother, this young fellow, that close the door and don't let anybody in, and don't go out. So when they all left we close the door. I was in such a shock that I was laying on the bed, and I was wetting. I was all the time wetting, that probably because from the shock.

And my mother was sitting and crying with me, and she was comforting me. And my little sister was crying and we-- they were knocking on our doors with their guns. And we just didn't let them in.

And we saw that all the others from our buildings, the ladies who were still in our apartments, they were all gone. And they also took the old Mr. Vontz on the wheelchair, and everybody was out. And in an hour we suddenly heard a terrible noise in our apartment that Mrs. Yoffe was in the washroom closed, and she fainted there.

And she was unconscious there. And in that when she was OK she tried to get out of the washroom, and when she heard that we are there she saw that there is Latvian, she fainted again, and she fell down on the floor. So my mother just went to help her.

When she was OK she told she's going to go out. She's afraid. My mother told you can go out, but not when they are on the stairways. When it will be quiet, because I don't want to get out. If they will shut us, let them shut us here right in our apartment. We are not going to go out.

So Mrs. Yaffa left also, so we were only three of us in the apartment. And the night passed by, and I was shaking the whole night till the morning. And in the morning my mother was looking out through the window to the building in which we stayed in ghetto was the last building. There was a fence. The street was divided in two parts.

The one part was for the ghetto, and the other side was for the Gentile people. So we saw our maid who was lived with us for many years in our house. And when she saw-- she was walking around and crying. She saw that nobody there. But we still-- we were there.

So my mother saw her through the window. And she told her-- she was somehow gave her signals. Said she should go and look where my father is. And to tell that we are still alive, and that we are here.

By the way, I skipped that at 5:00 in the morning there was very-- there was shouting on the street. Then when they made the people in a line, and they were pushing them to the-- now I know where they push them. To the Rumbula, to shot them. To the Bikernieki. I don't remember the first one was a Rumbula or Bikernieki forest.

And the people, the Germans and the Latvians, they were on the horses. And the Jewish people were running. There was most it was women, children, and elderly people, because the rest was out for work. And they kept these people for work who were out. They didn't bring them back to ghetto. So they were out.

They were only pushing the elderly, the children. And in the morning when we looked out from our kitchen window we saw as far-- we could see pretty far away that there was a lot of killed people laying. It was like I saw an elderly grandmother probably with a grandchild hacked and shot with a doll in their hands.

And it was it was a terrible sight seeing it-- terrible sight seeing. I will never forget-- I will never forget this terrible night. It is in my head, and it will ever remain there.

Side two, first tape. About how many people were shot in the forest?

Oh, I believe it was 30,000 Jews in Riga. And they were shot in two-- twice, one time at night, and then about two weeks there was another taking place with another 15,000. So they were done in two parts. And what was left over was just a little bit in the little ghetto.

Then they made the little ghetto. We were two weeks we didn't show that we are alive. Two weeks they didn't know that we are there. And in two weeks they were coming and telling us that if somebody is in you can come out, and say the shooting is over. And so we came out in two weeks.

And the large ghetto was canceled. It was made a little ghetto. And for some reason, they were taking some people in the place where they gave him the-- say we could live and we could work. And it was the German SS, it was Reichskommissariatskommissariat.

And it was in the city in the heart of Riga, in the city. And it was where Cafe Luna is-- was that time, and is also now since these days. And in this building we were 75 people, kaserned. And we were working there. I told the time a seamstress, I wasn't a seamstress, not at all.

But because we had a fur coat factory I still knew how to sew. And I had idea how to use a sewing machine. So I told that I am a seamstress, and my mother told us that she's a seamstress, too. And my little sister, who was an only what was she-- eight years old, so we just hide her.

And there was a few children in that Kaserne for 75 people, there was not many children. But there was few children. And we were working there. And my mother was a cleaning lady by the chief, by the Reichskommissariat. He liked her very much because she was cleaning very good his office, and I believe his bedroom, too. So nobody could touch her. She was just his private cleaning lady.

And I was taught by an older man. He probably wasn't old. That time he seemed old, but now when I'm 69 today I think that he was much younger than I am today. And I don't think that I'm old today. But at that time, when I was 14, I thought that he's old. But he maybe was 40 years of age.

His wife was shot. See, he didn't know. We thought that the people were someplace else in another ghetto. We didn't know that they were shot. That time we didn't know. His name was Neishloss, and he was teaching me to sew to make men's suits.

He really was teaching me. That was my first teacher, and he was really-- because I couldn't sew. I was lying that I am a seamstress. And then I told that I'm one year older. I told not that I am 14, I told that I'm 15. Because I was afraid that they will not take me to work.

We were kaserned there, in this place about three years. We were getting food. I wouldn't say that we were without. We had a bathroom, and we had-- we could take baths, and we could take a shower, I don't remember. But we had a little room. It was three of us, my mother, my little sister, and myself.

My father wasn't with us. He stayed in the place where he was that night when we were-- when they wanted to take us out to Bikernieki. So he stayed in the-- but every evening the soldiers were taking us for a walk. Because we were put in a kolonna, like four in a row. And we were 70 people, so not everybody had to go. But most of us we wanted to get out

on the street at least.

And we were marching through the-- not on the sidewalk, but on the street. And my father was also marching with their kolonna. So we saw each other, we waved hands, and we knew that we are alive and that they are alive. And that was for about maybe 1941, 1942, some in 1943.

And then one night they came and they took us to the-- it was liquidated this workshop. And I don't know why, and I don't know how, but they took us all. And they brought us to a concentration camp in Riga.

Which concentration-- which workshop was liquidated? Where you were sewing?

The one where we were Reichskommissariat where my mother was the cleaning lady and I was a seamstress. This was liquidated. And they were taking us to a concentration camp in Kaiserwald, Katset, it was called, Katset in Kaiserwald. We were there for four days. And then we were separated, and we were taken to another concentration camp in Riga, in Kaiserwald also.

Kaiserwald was a very expensive neighborhood before the war. It was only rich people like a very good neighborhood, and now where I live in Chicago, like Northbrook, like something like that. It was a very expensive for very rich people. And--

Was your father taken with you?

No, my father was still in Gestapo. But he was also-- the Gestapo also was liquidated. And he was also brought to the concentration camp. I believe that my father, yes, he was with us. I forgot. When we were in Reichskommissariat and my father was in Gestapo, then there was in Gestapo was the chief of the Gestapo where my father was working was Scherwitz I was reading another book and I discovered that service was by Jewish faith, but he was raised by the Germans. It is very, very-- for me, it was very interesting.

We didn't know why Scherwitz was so good to his Jewish people. And but he was really very good, and he was-- he made an exchange. He took the Pikenly family, which was with us in the Reichskommissariat to Gestapo, to the Washingtonplatz where they were kasernd. And he took my father and Mr. Kahn. And the third one-- I don't remember who was that-- and they came to Reichskommissariat, because their families were in Reichskommissariat.

So when we were taken to Katset. We were taken altogether. But in Katset we were separated. Women separate from the men, and the men were separated. And so we were there for a-- there were also workshops. We were sewing buttons on the uniforms and separating and cleaning them, and doing some in the workshop.

But there was still the way to live was there much better than later. Because we still could use a washroom, and we could wash up ourselves somehow. And we were sleeping in three floors, there was three. But every one person in a bed.

In bunk beds?

Yeah.

Piled three high, right?

Three high, yeah.

OK.

Three high and in bunk beds. And on the first floor was my mother, on the second floor was my little sister, and I was on the third. And every morning we were going to work. I was going and my mother was going to work. And my sister-- my sister was left there.



And then in a little-- in a week or what there was an appell again, and they were looking for all the children. My father ran in from the men's. They were taking out garbage, and my father ran in with a garbage sack. And he put my sister in the sack. And he tied it up and he threw it where the whole garbage was, in a big, big lot.

And when the appell was over and the children was taken away, like on the Schindler's List. They were taking the children away. And the children were screaming and yelling in the cars. And the mothers were staying behind the cars. It was very much like-- only that in Schindler's List they were taken in open cars, and in our place they were taking them in a closed cars. And so we were-- my little sister was in a garbage bag.

And in a few hours when they took all the children, my father went down to the garbage, and he was looking for the bag to find my sister if they found her. But he was shouting, and not very loud because loud he was also afraid. But he was-- he found her, and we took her from the sack out. And then in a while there was another appell, again, on the children. They were looking for the children to take all the children out.

That time my father took-- grabbed my sister. He was again running in, and he was again grabbing my little sister. Her name was Margot. And he was taking her to the kitchen and there were pots with peas, and he put her in a pot of peas.

Peas?

Pea soup. Pea soup, and it was six, she almost drowned. When we came in three, four hours she was almost drowned there. We got her out from the pea soup and she was again. So that was again that was all the time looking in the eyes of the death, all the time. All those years from 1940, when the Russians came, and from 1941 when they started the war with the Germans, till we're til 1945, til the end of the war. We were always, every day, watching that and looking in the eyes of the death.

I don't even know how we could survive it. Sometimes I don't believe that it really happened, because I think that a person couldn't ever live it. But as I gave my testimony to the Shoah and the tapes came back, it is written. Thank you for saying who lived it through. So it is really who could tell. There are not many people left now to tell. Because I'm already 69, and I was one of the very youngest ones.

All the oldest are dying, one after the other. We are losing them. And if people are not getting the testimony now they will never give it. And then we can find people who will tell today that there was no Holocaust.

And if somebody will tell me that there was no Holocaust, I can fight today. I can fight with that person, right, and I can spit him in the eyes if somebody will tell me that there was no Holocaust. Because what we lived through, nobody could do it, and how we survived. So back to then, to that we, again, saved my little sister.

Who was in the kitchen that they allowed her to stay in the soup?

I don't know. Probably nobody. Because when it was-- it was a terrible minute when they were in the Germans, and looking for the children, and seeking them whatever the places-- the hiding places are. So when we came-- when they were out, and it was over, my father was running in the kitchen. And when he opened the pot of soup he found her there in the soup pot. And he brought her back.

It was naked because the dresses he couldn't take. It was all in the soup. So he was hiding her somehow under his-- I don't know. And he was running back in and got her some kind of a dress. And she was still with us.

How old was she then?

It was-- I believe it was in 1943 or beginning of 1944, about 10 years old. And she was like an old lady with her mind. And so was I. We were not any more children. There was nothing left of to be children. The mind was like old people.

And so we still were in [NON-ENGLISH] and separated the men and women. My father only was-- he was working and

taking garbage out and doing things like that, and cleaning the place. So therefore, he had the possibility to run in and to hide my sister twice.

And then one day, at night, they were coming and they-- it was again, an appell. Appell it means that everybody has to go out, and they have to search you, and they have to count you. And you have to stay like a soldier in the lines. So they were taking us again out. And they were putting us on the car, on the trucks-- on the closed trucks.

And so that time, we knew that they are bringing us and they will shoot us. That is our last minute when we are-- and we stayed all three. We were staying there like heading in the bucket, and placed one very tired in the car.

And my mother was whispering me on the ear, they will shoot us. Just try to fell before they-- in the minute when they will start to shoot, try to fell. And pretend that you are dead. And then maybe you can get out of there.

Because there were some people who got out of the graves and came back. So we knew it already. So pretend that you are dead, just fell and pretend that you are dead.

And I don't know, how could I stand this talking. But it was like today you would tell me, would you like to come for lunch? And I would tell you, yes, where do we meet? That was a conversation that was very easy conversation. It wasn't that we are going to die in 10 minutes or in an hour.

We didn't have this feeling. We didn't have the fear to die. We just thought that has to happen, and that will be, and we didn't have the fear. I don't understand it even now, how we couldn't be scared. We didn't-- we weren't scared. We knew that it has to happen, then it has to happen.

And when they opened the trunk we saw that we are on our River Daugava in Riga, and there is a ship. And they are placing us on a ship. And that we are not going to be shot this time. So we didn't know where they are taking us, but it was a ship.

Was your father with you?

He was on that ship, but he was not with us. Because the women were separated, and the men were separated. We saw him later on another level. But this ship was something that I experienced first time in my life. There was no washrooms. There was a bucket in the middle. You had to use it.

There was no food, and there was nowhere to sleep, nowhere to sit. It was just we were sitting on the floor. And in the bucket you had to use instead the washroom. The smell was horrible. And it was just terrible conditions, just terrible.

How many people were in the room?

It was not a room. It was a ship, open, open ship. No room.

How many people were in the hold?

I don't know.

About?

I don't know. I don't know. I wouldn't tell you. It wasn't 1,000 or not. I don't know. But it was all the Jews which were left in the TVL, [GERMAN] lager, they were all on the ship. Maybe somebody who is older than me, maybe they would remember it better. I believe you have some testimonies. Because there are people who survived.

Was there room to lie down?

No, they were-- we were sitting. We were just sitting. And was it a four day trip, or it was a six day trip, I wouldn't say it

either today. I don't remember. But I know that we-- no, wait, I will tell you. I believe we left on September 24 and we arrived in Stutthof on October 2nd. So it was a week. Yes.

No food?

No food.

No water?

No, I don't think so. I don't-- maybe some things there was, but I don't remember. I don't recall.

Did many people die?

No. No, the people who was there were all very young. The age not older than 40. My mother was that time I believe 40. And there were young people, so we survived. Maybe there was some water, maybe. But I don't remember.

And when they took us out of the ship they placed us in some-- on a railroad. In some, how you call them, the little on a-- when it goes you take the animals over the railroad in the--

Cattle car?

Yeah. And they put us so many in the cattle car. And they squeezed us so bad. Then when they opened it then there was dead people in the back, in the car. There was like three, four, or five or six. But we were in the front so the front-- they pushed us so bad that we had to squeeze so bad. We were squeezed terribly, that there was left dead people on the floor.

And then they took us to Stutthof. And we were placed in barack 19. And in Stutthof if in TVL, there was for each bed three floors beds. For each bed in here was four people in one bed, and it was again three floors.

You say in Stutthof? You mean in Stutthof there was for each person a bed? No.

The for each person the bed was in TVL in Riga, in [GERMAN] lager. In there was for each a bed, then in Stutthof was four people in one bed. And it happened to be that in our bed was my mother, my little sister, myself, and a nurse from Riga, Leah Volkova.

And she was-- she had a knee which she couldn't bend. So her leg had to be straightened out. So we had to give a place. We were sitting all four, and we had to give her a place to stretch her leg. Because she couldn't bend it. It was that she was born with that.

And then it starts a terrible time for us, the most terrible time in my life in Stutthof. Every time we went on and on, it was worse and worse. In the beginning in Stutthof, we were getting a bowl of soup in the morning-- kind of soup. And there was no spoons.

And we were four people-- the bowl was for four people. And we didn't get anything else-- I think a piece of bread. But that was in the beginning. Later wasn't even that.

But in the beginning, that's what we were getting. And then there was such a sadism if you say in English, am I right? Such a sadism, it was terrible. They were getting us out during the night, or in the morning, or during the day. But we had to sit on the bed and doing nothing.

We didn't go to work. And we just were sitting there getting the soup, and then getting back. And then our chiefs in their barracks were from Ukraine, two anti-Semitic girls. The name of the one was Shura. I don't remember the name of the other one.

They were so sadistic. That were-- suddenly there was appell, we had to run out. They were hitting us with the sticks,

and we had to run out. And then they told us to do the exercises. You have to get fresh air and you have to exercise. But it was not exercising for fresh air. That was exercising for sadism.

Because when you exercise and you just make a wrong turn, they kill you. They were shooting you. Just shooting you. Not these girls, that was only the German soldiers who were working. But these girls were just hitting us and getting us out.

When they're in the washroom they were letting us go not when we needed it, but when they wanted it. The rest we had to sit. And if you need to use the washroom, you just pee in your whatever. They took all our clothes. We came from Riga with our clothes. They took all the clothes.

They gave us-- we had the striped things, you know the gray blue uniforms. And we had on our feet we had the [NON-ENGLISH]. Our heads were shaved, we didn't have any hair on our heads. And my little sister, I don't know how come that she had her leather boots from Riga still, and they left her with their boots. They didn't give her the [NON-ENGLISH]. And that was very nice of them, but she died because of that, likely.

Because she was growing. Her foot was growing, and the boot was too small. So she froze her foot likely. But back to where we were.

One day, I remember they took me and some other girls from our barrack. They just pointed out, you come out, do, do, do, come out. And we were taken to another barrack. In that barrack was typhus. We didn't know.

When I walked in, they told you have to take the dead people out from the barrack and carry them, four of us, in a blanket. By each end of the blanket we were holding each end of the blanket, and we were taking the dead people out. When we came in the barrack I fainted. I fainted and just from the smell. I fainted from the terrible smell which was in.

They put me-- I fainted then I lost consciousness. When I opened my eyes I was in the blanket, taken out and they were taking us to the stove, and to putting in the stove. That what we had to do with the dead people. So they carried me out because they thought I'm dead.

So when I was open my eyes I told them I'm not dead, and I got out of the blanket. So the four girls who were getting me got scared to death because they will shoot us all five. We are five now, and we don't carry anybody. So we were running back to the block to get somebody to carry out, because if not we will be shot.

It was a terrible experience. So we were working and about that was I believe-- that was already I believe in January when what I was talking. Til January we were living this terrible life. Every day there shoot some of us. Every day somebody couldn't do the exercises and was falling down.

And I was always afraid of my mother wouldn't make it, because I thought she's old. She was 40 years old. I thought that she's very old that time. And I was 17, and my little sister was in '43 she was about 10. Yeah, '44, it was in '44. Yeah, it was in '44, she was 10 years old.

And so we were thinking that when we came out on the appell, we never thought that we will come back. Every time we went out, every time somebody was left there. There was a fence was electrical. And when we saw the men on the other side I remember one girl running to the fence. And she was dead in a minute.

She was touching the fence with her hand, and I saw her dead in a second. We knew that we cannot touch the fence. And we were coming out to the appell, we were making our exercises, we were running. We were doing things which I don't know how a human being can let the other human beings do such terrible things.

And in my mind also was that if we will be shot, then we should fight. Why is the people when they get shot they don't fight? But later I understood. Because they undress you before they shoot you. They undress you naked by the grave where you have to be shot.

When a person is undressed he holds the hands where their private parts of their bodies. So you cannot fight. You cannot fight. If you would like to fight, you cannot fight. Your both hands are busy to hold the private parts of your body. So therefore, the people didn't fight. They were just dying.

And they were shot and dying like cockroaches. When you are guest or something like that. And you cannot fight back. You don't have the strength. You don't have the-- you're naked. You lose all your strength, and you cannot do anything. You cannot fight back.

So that was in Stutthof when we were in the barrack, when we were carrying the people. And we were carrying to the stove. And we came back. After a week I got sick-- very sick. I had typhus, but that time I didn't know.

And I got it from the barrack where I was carrying the dead people out. And I was hot. I had terrible temperature. I was burning, and I couldn't raise my head. And I was laying in the barrack. I don't remember on the bed or under the bed or where, and my mother told that she's going to go out.

It was winter in January, it was some snow on the ground. And she will get some snow because there was no water. And there was no food at all anymore. No food, no water, no washrooms, nothing. And my mother came back in, and she had such a little can-- a canister which the soldiers were carrying, a metal one.

And she went to get some snow. And when she came back I told-- the only one what I told is Pete. Pete, drink. I wanted to drink. And my little sister was holding my hands and touching my head. And so she got the typhus from me.

And my mother probably, too. But my mother, when she went out for the snow, she came back without a canister and without the snow and she told the German officer hit her with his boot over her head, and she lost consciousness. And in three days she died sitting with us on the bed.

And at that time and she died my sister was still-- she was still-- I was very sick. I couldn't raise my head. But my sister was still-- could walk still. So when they came, they were looking for dead people, the people who were OK. They were carrying out the dead people.

So they carried my mother out in the blanket. And I told my sister, let's presume that it is a funeral of our mother, and you just go with her. And just then come back. And because I just couldn't get-- I just couldn't get on my feet. So my sister did and then she came back we had to