

This is a recording for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, an interview with Jaffa Munk conducted by Margaret Garrett on August 8, 1996 in Baltimore, Maryland, tape one, side A. What was your name at birth?

My name at birth was Noemi Donath.

And where were you born?

I was born in Á“nod, which is the county of Borsod. It's about 9 kilometers or 9 miles from Miskolc.

And what was your date of birth?

My date of birth was April the 10th, 1931.

Would you talk about your childhood?

Yes. I grew up as the daughter of a rabbi. My father was a rabbi. And 26 little towns belonged to his congregation. I had a beautiful childhood, growing up among three brothers and sisters.

And what were their names?

The name of my brother was Joseph. And my sister is Esther, who is alive and is living in Montreal. My parents were very educated people, and they looked into it that the children should be going to the best schools.

I attended a Lutheran school, because there was no more Jewish school at the time when I grew up. However, we had been learning Jewish studies in the afternoons. Also, I had a private teacher who was teaching the German language. That was the language that more advanced people, more intellectual people had been learning. And my father was originally from Bratislava Czechoslovakia, and he wanted his children to be very cultured.

We are always going to the library, picking up books. My father would see what we are reading. He would discuss with us.

I come from a very religious background, but yet very open-minded. We had lots of celebrations. The holidays, Purim, everybody would come to the house.

Everybody, who? Relatives, friends?

Friends. Friends and people who lived in the town. The whole town had only 50 Jewish families.

And how large was the town?

The population of the town was less than 3,000 people. And from that, about 300 were Jewish people-- 50 families, but large families. Mostly, the Jewish people in the town, they were storekeepers. A lot of the people, they had big farms. There were doctors, some lawyers, but mainly, really, shopkeepers.

And your father was the rabbi in the town?

My father was the rabbi of the town. And they really loved him. He had a special school for big boys, which one, we call yeshiva. And I remember very clearly, the beautiful times when they were making the matzah near to the house, singing.

And I used to love, as a young kid, to walk around and all these lovely boys, they used to pet me. And I used to tell them that, leave me alone. So they named me "leave me alone" in Hungarian.

We had a beautiful house, lots of fruit trees, about 50 fruit trees. My mama used to cook all the fruit. It wasn't like today, you go to the store, and you buy the canned goods. She would be putting into jars, making her own jams and prune nectar, all these things. It was all a lot of fun.

At the end of our house was a river named Sajo. And we used to go to the bank of the river. It had a lot of grass. And cousins would come from the big city of Budapest, and we would get out there. And we would be dancing there, going swimming there, so we had a lovely upbringing.

I remember that my mother used to bring a sewing lady, and she would be sewing for us beautiful outfits for the holidays. She was a very devoted mother to her children. We used to tell, mama, you need, also, something new. But first was her three children. She had a lot of pride in two daughters.

My sister's name is Judith Esther, and my brother, Joseph. And my brother was educated in the big city in Budapest. And we used to love when he came home, and he told us beautiful stories about his experience in the big city.

I can thank him a lot, what I am today, because he was the one who was always introducing to me a lot of things about science and books. He would come home, and he would encourage that, whatever you have you, can lose one day. But what you have in your mind, nobody can take away. So that was our life in the small town. We have been very friendly with the Gentile people.

You went to a Lutheran school.

I went to a Lutheran school, and we were very friendly with the minister. We were very friendly with the doctor of the town. We were very friendly with our simple neighbors, too, who used to love to come. And my mother was called the midwife of the town, because when anybody gave birth to a child, my mother was rushing and helping, warming water for them, giving them some kind of food.

So this is not just Jews, but also Gentiles.

Also Gentiles. We were very friendly. We went to school. And matter of fact, I happened to be, in my childhood, very good in arithmetic. And there was the daughter of the so-called mayor of the town. She had difficulty, and I used to go to her house, or she would come to our house.

There was no separation between us, except religiously. They went to their church, and we went to our temple. But there was such a friendship.

Or we would go to the farmer to fetch our milk, because in those days, you didn't have milk in the store. So we would go, and we would sing with them while they were milking the milk. Or they would come over to us and taste the cookies. My mother was an excellent baker. And we didn't feel that there is any kind of hostility between us and our gentle people in the town until about 1942 or '43 when they started to throw bad words towards us.

Now, before 1942, were you aware that there was anything different going on?

No, nothing that was going, on except certainly kind of restriction, such as that the Jewish people could not any more have beef, because they did not allow any more to kill cows according to the rituals of the Jewish faith. So that was the very--

So this was the Hungarian government that said--

The Hungarian government had said.

--you can no longer kill cows according to the Jewish faith?

According to the-- that's right. That was the very first thing that I recall. And then later on, when we started to fear that

there is something going on, us, as children, was that we went one sabbath afternoon, a Saturday afternoon, we went for a walk.

And we were singing some kind of Jewish song. And the first time that a lot of the town people, they started to scream, dirty Jew, go to Palestine. That time, Israel was called Palestine.

Were these people that you knew or?

These were not people that we really knew. These were-- you can call it sometimes, hoodlums, who were in the street. So we didn't pay too much attention to that.

Yet I have to state it that my father had brothers and sisters living in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia. And he used to receive some letters from them. And I, as a young child, who happened to be hardly maybe 10 years old at that time, I remember hearing my father that, oh, poor brother of mine. He has to be in a bunker. Or poor brother of mine, they don't know where he is.

But I think being the youngest of the family, or even if I wouldn't be maybe the youngest, perhaps they wanted to shield us children. And they were not too much talking about what's going on in the world. I remember very vividly that my father used to listen to the secret radio. There were certain channels that brought news from out of Hungary.

And they would come home and tell, oh, thank goodness that Americans are advancing, or that the Britons are advancing, that they are hoping that they are going to succeed to win the war against Germany. That, I remember. But being a young kid, they did not involve too much into the politics. But here and there, I get it, that must be something going on. And it's very important that the German people should not be able to capture more and more countries.

I also remember-- that is already in 1943-- that a lot of people smuggled into Hungary, Jewish people from Poland-- not to small towns, because in a small town, they rightly would notice if somebody is foreign. But we had relatives-- my mother had two brothers and a sister in the city of Budapest. And they wrote that they have some guests from different country, and they telling us terrifying stories. But what exactly they were telling, that my mother or father would not tell us.

So I assume, remembering these little episodes, that my parents were, to a certain degree, aware of it, that there is something bad going on in Poland and in Czechoslovakia. Also, in 1942, '43 a lot of girls came over from Czechoslovakia, who escaped from bunkers where they were already hiding and they could not hide any more, certain relatives who arrived to the big city. And that was the other sign that something going on there, that they had to run away from home and abandon even their own family.

You said that you would not be able to hide Jews in a small town. Where you lived if, a Jew had suddenly shown up and started to live in your house, what would have happened?

Well, the local police would come, and they would arrest them. Now, when we are talking about hiding in a small town, this is really a story for later on. But it's related to this. In 1944, when the Germans marched into Hungary, my parents approached the Catholic priest, would he hide the children? So that also is telling that my parents were aware that something bad is waiting for us.

And at first the Catholic priest was thinking of it, that he would hide us children. And then he said, how can I do that? They right away knew that these are the children of the rabbi. That's number one.

Number two, he said, I have no wife. I have no children. How can I have children suddenly in my household? So my father told him, but after all, you can have some students. But the end of the story is that he refused to hide us.

So back in 1942, if extra Jews had appeared, would anybody have done anything about it then?

Yes. Yes.

In '42, they would have.

In '42, already.

But your family, as Jews, were living as they had before?

We had been living as before, yes, I think.

But if new Jews had arrived, something would have happened?

Something would happen. The local police would come, and they would have to identify themselves, who are they? In many fact, in 1942, we had a cantor who was singing in our temple. And since he had no Hungarian nationality-- in Hungary, it takes much longer than in America. In America, in five years, you can become a citizen.

He was not a citizen, because it takes 25 years. I don't know what the law today, but in those days you had to live in Hungary 25 years in order to get citizenship. And this fellow was from Poland. And he had no Hungarian citizenship. He had to leave the country.

And we were crying that he is leaving the country, and where is he going? He went to Palestine. And today, he is alive with all his family and with grandchildren and so on.

And my family is in ashes. So in a way, it was luck that you were not a citizen and you had to leave. But that was the law. If you were not a Hungarian citizen, you could not live in the country.

If you were not Jewish, you also could not live in the country?

If you were not Jewish, also.

Also.

Also.

So it wasn't just Jews who had to--

Well, I don't really know what happened with the people. If you were just a temporary citizen, you were allowed to leave, except if you were a Jew. If you were Jewish and you did not have the citizenship, that was the first thing that came out in 1942, that you had to leave the country.

So that applied to Jews--

To Jews.

--only?

Yes.

OK.

Yeah, only to Jews.

So you were saying that you were aware that something bad was happening and at the--

Yes, I was sensing. I was sensing the tenseness. I was sensing that my father is always secretly talking with Mama. And

when they notice that the children are coming, they would change the subject. I was noticing that my parents were shielding us more than before. If it was going to the streets or traveling, they were much more alert to what's going on than before.

Until 1942, '43, we were living a fairly free, happy life, traveling, going to the theater, going to the circus, anywhere we wanted to go. Then later on, I am aware of it. I mean, I remember it, that the parents did not want the children too much to be in the streets and not to go to public places. We were not questioning why, but that's what I remember.

And what do you remember next?

The next thing that I remember, in 1943, September, my older sister-- I am the youngest in the family-- she went to study, also, in Budapest in a special school. And my brother was away, also, in a special school. And I remember that the parents were very worried, are they OK? When before, they were also away, except till this time, they were not so concerned if everything is going OK with them.

And in 1944, when the Germans marched into Hungary, my parents wanted the children to come home. And there was restriction. Jews could not travel any more in train. So we are very worried if ever my siblings will be able to come home.

And one morning, my father is just stepping out from the congregation, from the temple, and here is my sister. How did you get home from Budapest? And she told us the story, that my aunt dressed her to look like a Gentile, because the Gentile people were a little bit differently dressed. We were a little bit more fashionable dressed, the Jewish people. She should look more like a peasant.

It's maybe not right to say Gentiles. It's right to say that she should look more like a peasant girl. And she shouldn't be too attractive. She was a very beautiful girl.

And my father was asking, how did you get home? And she said let's go home quickly. So she came home and she told the story, that relatives put her on the train. And luckily, it went smooth. And when they saw her looking like a little peasant girl, they didn't approach her.

And when she arrived, there was no train station in Ánod. It was about seven kilometer from us, a train station. And when she unboarded, when she came down from the train, she thought, it's night. What do I do, a young girl? How do I get home? I can't walk this in the night.

She remembered that there is a Jewish family nearby, and she knocked on the door. And lo and behold, there was the headquarter of the German SS army. And she is opening the door, and she said, oh, I am sorry. I don't want to disturb you. I just wanted a little bit of water.

And she quickly went out. And here, she is wandering and wandering. And suddenly, she remembered there is the other Jewish family living in the town.

She went there, and they told her, your sleep over. And the next morning, they brought her home. So that's how my sister arrived.

And then later on, my brother arrived home, too, also in a very special way. He got some papers from a Gentile friend. And he arrived home, too, so that time, we already know that we are occupied by the Germans, Hungary.

Yet Horthy, who was the head of the Hungarian government, was refusing to let to do anything to the Jewish people. But it didn't take too long. The Germans override him, and they fought against that.

And the new decree that came out was that we have to have the yellow star on our clothing, that we are not allowed to be in the street, only at certain times during the day. The Gentile people are not allowed to sell us any merchandise. We are not allowed to hire any non-Jewish people working for us. And slowly and surely, later on came out that we have to

make a inventory of whatever we have in our house and submit it to the mayor of the town.

I remember that my mother was taking out from the closet, the beautiful tablecloths. In those days, years before a girl was married, they were embroidering and having the monograms on the tablecloth and on the bed sheets and the pillowcases. And by each one that she was folding and writing down, her tears running from her eye. And my brother was helping her to make the inventory and--

And you were watching all this?

And I was watching all this, because I was a very curious little girl. And I think that I did not grasp it in the depth that this is not going to be ours anymore. I was just admiring to see the beautiful colors and the beautiful embroidery and counting. And my brother was saying, Mommy, don't worry. We come back, I will buy you the most beautiful linens. That is ringing in my ear until this day.

He said, when we come back.

When we come back. So that time I understood that it means we have to leave our house. And hopefully, we will come back.

I have to tell that my father has been chosen to be the head of the ghetto, which one was is located not far from Miskolc, called the place Di³sgyor. It was a town where they had factories for iron. They emptied the workers houses, which one was very poor, like one room and kitchen kind of apartments. And they had to organize that place to become the Jewish ghetto. And at the time when we were doing this inventory, my father was away, because he had to go and organize the ghetto in Di³sgyor.

Do you know how they chose your father to be the head of the ghetto?

I have no idea why he was chosen to be, because not only people from ³nod, but from all the surrounding towns, except that he was the chief rabbi for all these towns. So maybe that's the reason that they had been choosing him to be the head of the ghetto. And we were expecting that Father should come back from that after he is doing that job, organizing the place. However, he never came back from the ghetto.

After a few days, the inventory was made. My mother succeeded to take a few precious pictures from the family and from us children and a few tablecloth and a few silverware, such as in which one she was lighting the Shabbat candles, some Kiddush cups, and some silver cups-- one of them, I happen to have it here-- to our neighbor, who was very devoted neighbor to us. Well, we were very devoted, very good friends, helpful for each other all the time.

And she asked her, do me a favor, Martha, put these things away. And you know we have to most probably leave the town. But when we come back, you will give this back to me. And if I am not coming back, then please, would you give this to my children? So all these little things indicate that my mother and father, they were informed somehow that elderly people are killed, or that elderly people, they don't make it. They had prayer and hope that the children will remain. And she wanted us to have some mementos, something that is from our household. And--

At the time, you did not realize what your parents did. But looking back on what they said, you can see what they knew.

Exactly. Exactly. At that time, I couldn't understand why Mother was hiding gems in the attic, why was she putting away certain things or some money, giving to other Gentile family in a small town who came to see if we have everything.

I mean, there were, which one, we called them chasidei umot haolam. They called them the righteous Gentiles, who were worried. And they understood and endangered themselves, such as that family from a little town, H³dv³g, coming in and bringing some potato, knowing that we can't anymore buy food.

Now, this is before you went to the ghetto? You couldn't buy food.

Before we went to the ghetto. Before we went to the ghetto. So that family, my parents used to have a collection of silver coins. Today, people are investing in stock, or they're putting in bank.

In those days, if you had a little money, you bought some silver coins. The value didn't go down for the children's education later or if a child has to get married. So my father had a collection of silver money, and he gave it to this Gentile family.

Let's stop here and turn--

Yeah?

--over the tape.

OK.

Tape one, side B.

OK. Shortly after we had been submitting the inventory, giving to our neighbor, certain items to keep, it came announcement-- in those days, it was in the marketplace. They used to announce in the loudspeaker, all the Jewish families have to pack up. They are able to take only certain amount of clothing with them. And they have to go into the ghetto.

Now, we had to hire with our own money, a horseman, buggy, pack up, and go. We had to leave the keys and all the inventory at the house of the mayor. And we had to be at 9 o'clock in the morning in 1944, end of May-- I don't exactly remember completely, the date, but I do remember that it was in May-- we had to go into the ghetto in the Austria.

Now, the mayor was the father of your good friend. Is that right?

Yes, that's right.

And what happened to your friendship with her?

We were friendly until the last minute. However, at the time when the yellow star came out, that we had to wear it on our clothing, our relationship cooled off. And the last thing that I remember him saying, the Mayor, that I am sorry. I am not in a position of helping you.

In other words, he must have to have some kind of emotions. And yet, he was really maybe in a position where he was watched by the German occupying army, that he could not do anything since he was the only one important person in the town. So I am not able to blame him. It hurt at that time, but you have to put yourself in the shoe of the other person.

And I have to state here that the Hungarian police department, the Gendarmerie, they were worse than the Germans. They were more brutal. They were more beating us up and more hostile in every way.

So we hired the buggy. We packed up. My mother took with her, one chicken.

You have to understand that we lived in a town. And in the backyard, my mother was growing chickens and ducks, turkey. And so somehow, she was so sentimental with her little chickens, that one chicken, she wanted to take with her.

So she took a basket, she put some straw, and she took one chicken with us to the ghetto, and some dishes, some little leftover potatoes and little flour, whatever we still had in the house. And each one of us packed up some suitcase with some clothing. And here, we went with the buggy arriving to the ghetto.

And did you take any favorite things that you wanted to have?

Only our personal jewelry, but we were not allowed to. We had to leave everything, such as clothing--

Books?

Books. It had to be in the inventory. We had to write down how many books we have or how many lamps we have, how many--

So you couldn't--

--furniture we have, but we could not take with us.

You couldn't take a favorite book?

No. No, we couldn't take a favorite book. The only thing that we took with us was really our personal jewelry. And my father took with him, when he-- at the beginning, he went, he took with him some books to study. But we, when we had to leave the house, we had to leave everything in the house.

And the official statement of the German was that you will come back and you will-- that's why we are doing the inventory, so that we can claim, when we come back, what is missing from the house. That's where now, you know that behind of all these decrees and organization of the Jews to go into the ghettos in Hungary was Eichmann. Eichmann was in Budapest, and he was the one who was organizing the departure of the Jewish people from Hungary. And the inventory and what you can take and what you can't take, this was all from the Eichmann office. And the Jewish organization was hoping to have some kind of dialogue with him, some kind of agreement with him, that if people are going to give you a certain amount of money, would you leave the Jewish people to stay in the ghetto in Hungary, or some of them even in their homes?

We arrived to the ghetto, and we were shocked to see how many Jewish people have been occupying already. And the headquarters that was given to us was one tiny, small room and a tiny eensy-peensy little kitchen. And yet, I have to say that all was luxury apartment compared to many other people who had to sleep together in two, three families in one room.

Is this, do you think, because your father was the head of the ghetto, that--

Maybe.

--you had better quarters?

Maybe. And maybe, they, after all, felt that the rabbi still is somebody important. Let's give him-- I really think that that was the reason for it. My mother placed the little basket with the chicken in the kitchen. And this made she felt like there is some part with her from her childhood.

She was brought up, she was born in Ā“nod. She was the daughter-- her father, my grandfather was the previous rabbi before my father became the rabbi there. So everything from the town, the river, the grass, the chicken, the fruit-- everything was a part of her life. And at least, this chicken reminded her.

And the chicken is a very special story, because usually, chickens, they lay egg every other day, except today, when they are in incubator, and the food is different. But in the primitive way of feeding them and raising them, chickens used to lay egg every other day. And while we were in the ghetto, that chicken laid egg every single day.

And I remember that my mother always said that this egg is for my youngest daughter because she is so skinny-- in those days-- and she should be eating. And I refused. So sometimes, she made a scrambled egg and divided between all of us. Sometimes, she collected at least two eggs, and she baked a cake with the little leftover flours that she brought with her.

And then, we celebrated Shavuot, which one is the holiday of receiving the Torah and half Sinai, on Mountain Sinai. We celebrated. That was the last holiday that I was with my parents together.

And before that, there went a whole discussion, what should we prepare for the holiday? We were used to have nice meal. And my mother started to cry. And she said, should we kill the chicken, and I make a nice meal? Or should we keep the chicken?

I'm sorry. So the decision was that they kill the chicken, because you don't know what will be, really, our fate. Apparently, they sensed-- again, it's a indication, which one at that time, I didn't understand, but looking back-- and Mother made from that one chicken-- name it, everything.

She made chicken soup. She made roast chicken. She made hamburger from the white part. And that was the last chicken soup that my mother made.

And what was your religious life like in the ghetto? In the ghetto, the religious life was that my father had a special room where the people went to pray, and--

This is where everyone in the ghetto--

For everybody in the ghetto. But it didn't take too long, and the Hungarian police came to the ghetto. And they came to pressure and question the people, where did they hide things, and where did you put certain things? You didn't have everything in the inventory. We know that you had more silverware.

We know that you had some silver money. We know that you had a store. Where is all the money that you have been collecting all these years? And many times, they will very brutally beat up people, thinking that if they are really hiding some things, seeing that they are so tortured, they will give in, and they will tell.

And the headquarters of the police department was behind our window. And my mother used to hear the screaming of the people when they were beaten up. And she just fainted. She just couldn't take it. She grew up with all these people from her childhood on, and seeing them, that they are blue, and that they are losing blood, and that they are beaten up so severely, she just couldn't take it.

Either she was sitting and praying, either she was crying or once, I remember when she fainted, and I do remember when that took place, when our doctor, who was helping the whole town, giving birth to children, he was everything, a general doctor, who helped heal children and birth children and whatnot, he was beaten up very severely, to that extent my father had to intervene and to get permission to take him to a hospital. And unfortunately, he died from the beating-up. So that was the time that my mother-- we used to live next door to the doctor-- and she just-- this was the height of what she could suffer, my mother.

And after being in the ghetto about three weeks, the new decree came out that we have to leave the ghetto.

Now, going back to the room--

Yes.

--that your father had set aside for people to come and pray--

Yeah.

--did that room remain set aside for people to pray the whole time you were in the ghetto?

The whole time that we were in the ghetto.

And were there services held for people to come?

Yes. Yes.

And your father--

Three times in the day, and my father conducted--

Every day?

--the prayer, yes.

Three times a day.

Yes. As well, my father was corresponding with the Jewish organization in the big city of Budapest, who were in contact with Eichmann, trying to ease the life of the people in the ghetto, questioning them, what is our fate? What do we have to do? Do we have to listen to all this, or should we rebel?

Should we organize something to escape or just follow orders? And that, I recall, that the order came in from the Jewish organization in Budapest that Eichmann is promising that we will be taken to a working camp and nothing is going to happen to anybody of us, and that we should be obeying all the laws and all the decrees, because that's the only way that everything will be smooth and everything will be good.

So you remember your father talking about that?

Yes. Yes, that I already remember very well from the ghetto, and--

And the services that your father conducted in the room, did the police ever try to interfere with that?

No.

Do you think they knew about it?

They knew about it. And that was not their concern, because as far as I remember, they said, let them do what they want to do. It won't last too long anyway.

OK.

That was their approach.

OK.

So that, they did not interfere with it. And from the ghetto, first of all, they collected all able working men. And at that time, it was my father taken from the ghetto and my brother and all the people that I can recall from age 16 till about 45, 50, all able working men has been collected and taken away from that ghetto.

It was very sad kind of a farewell from each other departing. We didn't know where they are taking them and what will be our fate. All woman and babies and children, we are remaining, and only old people. But they said that they need some workers, so we hope that it's true, that they are taken to work.

Did you say they took your father?

Yes.

So he had been the head of the ghetto. So he was no longer--

No longer head of ghetto, no longer organized things in the ghetto, no more praying in the ghetto. The men were taken. Two days later, they said that all the people who remained in the ghetto, they have to march 7 kilometer, which one is approximately 3 mile in our measurements here, into a brick factory in the city of Miskolc, and that from there, hopefully, in a short time, we'll go to Czechoslovakia, where they need working people. And we will be transported to that place, the working camp in Czechoslovakia in a short time.

So we are walking. And at that time, not only Hungarian policemen, but the German SS soldiers were going with us, marching with us. And if you were going slow, they were beating you up. And they were hollering that you go faster. We have no time.

And we arrived to the brick factory, which consisted only from a roof and no walls, no nothing on the ground except some leftover bricks. And as we are arriving to that place, we hear some men screaming to us. And we thought that we hear the voice of my father, but we couldn't recognize him.

Lo and behold, he was there. And they sheared his beard. They took off his hair completely.

He did not had any more, his nice suit. He was in pants and a shirt. And then, we got united. And we were in the brick factory, not doing nothing except crying and starving for a few days.

Did you have anything to eat?

Only some leftover bread that Mama baked yet in the ghetto and maybe a few potatoes. I remember that my mother went out in the ground, and she collected some woods. And she had still with her, one pot.

And she cooked some kind of a potato soup, but it was more water than potato or anything else in it. But at least it was warm. And really, what we ate, mainly, it was stale bread that we had still with us.

And one day, the Germans soldiers came in, and they said that they need some few hundred girls to work in their headquarters, to clean and to shine shoes. So my mother thought that, here, my girls are going to die from starvation. Let them go to work. Maybe they will be fed. Maybe they can bring home some food for the rest of the family.

We were taken with army truck. Yet my mother gave a whole speech-- be careful, you're going with soldiers, et cetera. And they said that they bring us back in the afternoon. We went with the soldiers two times, two days.

And our work was to clean dishes, to wash their clothing, to iron for them, to shine their shoes. And they threw us some bread and some cooked potato, which was luxurious for us. And we brought home, we hide it in our pocket, a few potatoes, a little bit bread. And they brought it back to the factory.

And the third day, we were waiting and waiting that they come to pick us up again, because at least we were occupied. We were doing something. Plus, to eat, we were given a little bit something to eat. They didn't come.

And instead of that, again, they announced that we have to march from the factory, which was very close to the railroad, we have to march to the railroad. And we can take as many things we have still left over. And we are now going to travel to the real good place. We are going to travel to the factory in Czechoslovakia, to a working camp-- not to a factory, but to a working camp.

So little we understood or little, really, we knew what that meant, to go to the railroad. Again, the Germans, with their huge dogs this time, they were the ones who were taking care of us, watching over us. And whoever was collapsing, the dog just tore it apart.

We were walking, rushing to work, rushing to the railroad. And we just couldn't believe our eyes, what kind of train was waiting for us. It was the cattle train without window. They pushed us in, 70 people into one cattle train, to one wagon.

And they gave us two bottles. In one was water, and the other one, instead of bathroom. Old people screaming and crying, squeezed like sardines. And they closed the door. Here we are in the cattle train.

And my mother and father were sitting next to each other. And it was nighttime. And I heard my mother crying. And my father said, I wish that at least the children should remain alive.

So again, I am sure that they sensed it. They knew it. They had some kind of information. They were fearful, their instinct, whatever, but they knew that this is not going to a good place. You don't take people in a--

And what about you? Do you remember what you were thinking at the time?

At the time, I was just thinking, where could I have some air? Where could I have something to drink? How could I calm the younger children that were crying?

So you were thinking of the immediate present--

Of in the--

--and not--

Yes. Nothing that--

--thinking about what going to happen so much?

No. No, I was not thinking. For sure, I was thinking of my mother, because I saw that she is really not feeling good anymore. And I was very close to my mother.

And I used to pet her and calm her and say to her that God is with us, and it will be good. And my mother would say, for sure, you will have yet, a beautiful life. And then, she would overcome her sadness, just to reassure her children that everything will be OK. When we got to the city of Kosice, which is a border city between Hungary and Czechoslovakia--

What was the name of it?

Kosice. And they opened the wagon, the train, the cattle train, and they said that one person can go down and fetch some water and empty the bathroom bucket. So nobody was daring to do that. They thought that this is some kind of a trick that the Germans are trying to have some person to go down, and they will kill that person.

My brother volunteered. And he went down. And he looked around, and he saw that we are in a city. From the train station, he could sense it or recognize it. And he fetched the water.

And he asked, aren't we getting all off from the train? And that the German soldier said, no, no, no, we are not yet in the place where your working camp is. It is taking a little bit longer.

And before they really closed the door, they asked that if you still have on you any jewelry, please give it now. You will get it back. But because we are going over a border, and it's not good, and it might get lost, and all kind of stories, and they took away the last jewelry that we still had.

By the way, I forgot to start that before we went away from the ghetto, they already took it away from us all the jewelry except each one of us was trying to hide a mementos, ring, or my mother, her wedding band, or my father had a very special gold watch that he had it in his pocket. And they came, and they screamed. And they said, you better give it, because otherwise, we beat you to death. So everybody got scared, and the last jewelry or the last possession that we had, we gave it right away.

They closed the door, and the train was going like mad, was rushing. Where is the train rushing so much? And the noise was tremendous. And the crying, and people died-- people in the train.

And after three days-- 3 and 1/2, they said, actually, traveling in this abnormal kind of situation-- no more water. The bucket was full with what people made. This smell, the starvation, the crying, the screaming, the unknown-- people were completely washed out.

Some old people who died, they smelled. And suddenly, they open the train. We are in Auschwitz.

When we arrive to Auschwitz, first the German soldiers with their dog, they came to the door. And they said that you have to get off very fast from the train, because you are going to start to work. And leave your belongings. That will be shipped to your camp. Why should you carry it?

Then there were some striped-clothed men, who were screaming also that, go fast! You have to line up five in a row. And in between screaming to us, they talk to us in Yiddish, a few verse in the Jewish language, saying to us that, don't go, the mothers with the babies. Give the babies to the old grandmothers.

And we thought they're crazy. Why are they saying this? Why should a mother give up her child and give it to a old grandmother that hardly can walk anymore?

We all looked pale, hungry, tired. There are none. The mental facilities, they are not working properly anymore when you've starved for such a long time, when you've suffered with the darkness.

We didn't want to believe what they are saying to us or to do what they are telling. There were people, though, whose mind was maybe working better, who took the babies and gave it to the grandmother, which one saved many people's life. But we didn't want to depart from Mama.

They said, don't go families together. Then, they would holler in German. But in between, each time, they would give us some little advice, something that later on, we understood how much they wanted to try to help us and to save us.

Then, when they noticed that the German soldier with the big dog is coming, they would holler, schnell, schnell! Los, los! You have to go fast and line up, separate the men, separate the women.

We lined up. And we were standing, Mama in the middle, my sister, and me, and then two other girls from our home town, and the men in a separate line. And I remember my father screaming my name. He was very worried because I was the youngest.

So you were then about 13?

Yes, and I was very, very skinny girl. They used to send me to a resort place to gain a little bit of weight. When I was a child, I just happened to be very slim.

And my father was screaming my name. And I turned around, and he said, whatever happens, wherever you go, you continue to believe in God. And that's the last verse of my father that's ringing each time in my ear. Apparently, he knew that terrible things are coming, and he wanted to reassure that we should continue or that the faith should give us strength.

Let's stop here and turn over the tape.