

This is an interview for the US Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection. We are interviewing Guta Jacobson. My name is Esther Finder. The interview was in Rockville, Maryland, and the language will be English. Can you tell me, what was your name at birth?

My name was Guta Rogowitz.

Could you spell your last name for me?

R-O-G-O-W-T-Z.

Were you born and where?

I was born in Lodz April 23, 1925.

Can you tell me your parents' names?

My mother was No'ah, Noah, and my-- my father was Noah, and my mother was Chaya Rogowitz. Her maiden name was Steinfeld.

Do you have any brothers or sisters?

I have three sisters besides me. I had-- besides me, so we were four together. One got killed, and we survived, three of us.

Can you tell me their names?

Esther, Bella, and Guta. That's the oldest, which is-- her life is Esther. The middle one is Bella, and I'm the youngest, Guta.

And the name of the sibling that did not survive?

Hanna.

Where did you grow up?

In Poland, in Lodz.

Can you tell me what Lodz was like in your childhood?

Well, as young as I was, I belonged to a organization, HaNoar HaTzioni, and we really got to know at that time what Palestine meant. I was quite-- I don't know if I was 11 years old when I started to go to the HaNoar. It was a very nice group of youngsters. We worked very nicely. We learn a lot. And until 1939 we went to the Lodz Ghetto.

Can you describe what Lodz the city was like? Was it a big city?

Well, Lodz was a very, very big city, and it was a prosperous city. My father was a textile, and that was very high in textile. I went to school, the public school. I had a beautiful religious home. My mother was wearing a wig, quite observant in Jewish religion, and that's how I was raised.

Were there many Jews in the town?

A lot of Jews, a lot of Jews, bustling with Jews and stores. But I was young. I wasn't so interested in these things. We had a nice home.

In your childhood, what were the relationships like between the Jews and the Christians in the town?

Strange, a little strange. I lived [PLACE NAME] 23 [PLACE NAME], and I lived among a lot of Christians. In fact, when I came back from concentration camp after the war, I went to the Christian. I was with my sister, with middle sister, and they were wondering that we are still alive. I received letters from them because we weren't there anymore. But I didn't want to stay among them. My aim was to go to Palestine.

Before the war, did you experience any antisemitism?

No, I was too young for that.

I was 13 years old. I didn't experience too much antisemitism, not too much, not-- well, I lived in an affluent place in Lodz, and I didn't-- in school you would ask-- I was a Jew, and in fact, I liked my teacher. and I always was carrying her bags home, and I didn't really experience too much antisemitism.

You mentioned that your father was in textiles, was a textile manufacturer?

Yes.

What work did your mother do?

My mother didn't work. She was a little-- selling certain things, like home things, but a regular job she never had, not that I remember.

She was just a homemaker?

She was just a homemaker, yeah.

What jobs and responsibilities did you children have in your household?

My own children?

No, you. When you were a child, what were some of your chores or your jobs were on the house?

Before the war, I didn't have any special responsibilities. Yes, I did have one responsible, which I'll never forget. I had to come home-- we only had school to 1:00 that time. I had to come home, and my oldest sister, which they killed-- she worked with my father in a textile factory. I had to take lunch for her. That time was dinner, but we ate lunch 1:00. So it had to be very hot, that lunch, and I had to go and take to the shop for her lunch five times a week after school.

I threw down my briefcase, and I ran with the lunch. This I'll never forget. But my sister gave me \$0.25, yeah. But she expected me to go with the trolley car, but I never went with the trolley car because I needed an ice cream. So I took the \$0.25, and I had an ice cream. But she was the nicest person you ever could-- I'll never forget that sister because I was the baby, and she was the oldest.

Did you have any formal Jewish education?

No.

You said you came from a religiously observant family. Did you have a favorite holiday when you were a child?

I was terribly afraid of Yom Kippur, but my favorite holiday was Passover. That was the time when I got new shoes and new clothes, and I was dressed from head to toe. And that was the nicest time. I'll never forget Passover at home, although I never stayed up for the Seder because it was much too late for me. But I remember the hustling and the

bustling for Seder.

What did you do for fun when you were not in school?

I belonged to the organization. Mostly we met at Saturdays because at night I was not allowed to go out, after 10:00, after 9:00. And we was dancing Horahs and singing Hebrew songs, which I still remember. And that was nice, a nice group.

What songs did you sing?

Hava Nagila, all kind-- off-hand I cannot remember, but very nice with the Horah.

What did you do other than your time with the group? What did you individually do for fun or for relaxation in your free time?

I was too young to do, really, anything. I played with the girls downstairs, and there was a lot Gentile people there. I played with them. I never encountered the Jew story.

Before the war, did you have any idea what was going on in Germany with--

No, no, no. I had no idea. I only know that 1939 we left Lodz. It was summer, and we went to our summer place. Like we go here to the mountain. And my father came with a horse and buggy and took us home before the time, and I was supposed to go to September to school, so I never went back. And they said that Poland is going to be in war. And I read what a war meant, but I didn't observe that much.

Did you have any opportunity-- you or your family have any opportunity-- to speak to anybody who had fled from Germany before the war, any Jewish refugees or anybody who have been asked to leave Germany?

Not that I know about it.

Had you heard about Kristallnacht?

Kristallnacht? No, I only heard after the war. In Berlin, you mean. Yeah, after the war I heard about it.

When you did hear that war might be imminent or that there might be a war coming, how was that explained to you by the adults, your parents and other adults?

Well, since my mother went through World War One, she was very much afraid of the war. We didn't observe that much, that we're going to be so much persecuted. We knew that Hitler doesn't like the Jews, that he was burning the synagogues in Germany, but it will never come to us this way, no. That was the only thing that I knew until Hitler came to us.

Before we get to the beginning of the war, I want you to stop for just a minute. Is there anything about your childhood that you would like to talk about, any other memories, any experiences that stand out in your mind, special moments?

The special moment was when I went with my mother to the synagogue to the shul. I'll never forget this. First of all, my father was a [? Kohen ?], and I'll never forget that he was dressed in a white kittel, they call it. I was terribly afraid for that, terribly. Until today, when I go to shul and I see these kittels, I'm terribly afraid. I thought that he's going to die. I'll never forget this.

Otherwise, the holidays in the house, that preparation for the holidays-- my mother used to make her own wine-- I'll never forget-- from cherries, and the other one was raisins. I helped a lot with that.

Friday-- I'll never forget-- I had to take the tshulnt to the oven. There was one bakery close to us, and I used to take the

tshulnt to the oven. But Saturday I had to bring the tshulnt because Mama said, you took the tshulnt. You have to bring back the tshulnt. I'll never forget this.

It was nice. It was nice. Then I'll never forget Paice. The dishes, the changing of the dishes, and the stove-- I'll remember-- I speak boldly. I remember how she took the-- she glued stones, and she put on the oven those glued stones. It should be Passover.

I'll remember the matzahs. We used to put the matzahs in a big pillowcase, all the matzahs, and so many eggs, [YIDDISH] of eggs. It wasn't dozens, a [YIDDISH] is more than a dozen. And what else could I tell you? I was busy that time because I had to go with my mother to schlep all that and to help her, yes, because the other sisters were working.

Tell me about your relationship with your sisters before the war. Since you were the youngest, what kinds of things did you and your sisters talk about and dream about for your future?

They only wanted me-- I was quite good in school. To be honest, my two older sisters never went to school. They were homebound. Like they would say today, they learned by themselves, and believe me, they learned so much. They were good mathematicians.

I was really the only one, with my other sister, who went to school, regular public school. They wanted me to be only secretaries, and my older sister would bring-- they only called me [YIDDISH] because I was the youngest. She brought me chocolate and always brought me something and always gave me money because she was the one who made money.

Can you translate what you said in Yiddish with your sister called you? What was the word that you used?

The [YIDDISH], the baby. That's all. I never had a name, probably. I only was called the baby. That's why when I called-- this is my baby. I have two other children. Steve is my baby, and the only man-- I say I don't know any other way because that's how I was raised.

At the beginning of the war, what was your first indication that war had begun?

The first indication was, before the Germans came into Poland-- it took eight days for them to come into Poland. The war went on eight days or 10 days, something like that, until the Germans walked into Poland.

Did you mean into your part of Poland?

Yeah, in Lodz. But when they put on us the [NON-ENGLISH], the yellow bands, then I couldn't accept it.

Let's go back to your very first encounter with the Germans. Tell me about the Nazi invasion and your first glimpse of this war.

Just happened that I lived on one side of the street where I lived. Across the street was one of the biggest and the most prominent built house in my time. I saw when they put the first foundation, [? Sulejmanowic ?] house. And when the Germans took over this house and I saw them for my window across the street-- that was the first thing, and my mother always pushed me away from the windows. They shouldn't see me, and I shouldn't see them. That was the first awful, awful impression.

And there was only soldiers. Officers were living in that house. They evacuated everybody, and they occupied that house. This I'll never forget. That was the most beautiful house in Lodz, that building.

You mentioned the armbands. What other changes were imposed on the Jews when the Germans came in?

The curfew. We had a curfew. We were not allowed to go out at dawn, and I wanted to go out to play. What do you mean they're not going to let me go out? I didn't do nothing. So my mother used to keep us at home.

And then food shortage-- we couldn't buy food, no, no. The stores were closed. The Jewish butchers were closed immediately, and my mother couldn't eat any other meat than kosher meat. So the hunger set in until a year later, 1940, when they took us to Lodz Ghetto. We had to leave home.

What were some of the changes that the Germans made with respect to the Poles? What changes were imposed on the Polish Christian population?

Well, the Christian population, to compare-- because I lived with Christians, as I mentioned before, in one house. They had the freedom. They could have went any place they wanted. We lost-- we didn't have it. I felt that the most because we little quite intelligent girls, and I couldn't see that. And they start to separate themselves from the Jews. I felt that in my own house where we lived.

We didn't own a house. We lived in an apartment house, we lived in a rented apartment. They separated us from them right away. In fact, downstairs it was a drugstore. By us, downstairs, it was a drugstore. The Germans took everything out from that drugstore. I don't know if it belongs to a Jew. I cannot really say.

So right away we couldn't get any food, although my mother used to prepare potatoes, and flour, and sugar. She prepared all that. But you couldn't go into the store and buy anything.

We were afraid to walk because everybody recognized us. Even my own friends-- I played with them in the backyard-- they stood away from me like they wouldn't know me anymore. And I couldn't comprehend in my young girl mind what did I do, why, what did I do.

Did your parents explain any of this to you?

No. They didn't want to fright us, especially me. They didn't want to fright us. Maybe the older children-- my oldest sister was married, and I remember going to her wedding. And she left home before Hitler came. She left Lodz before Hitler came. She had a family in Demblin, and she went to the family there. Over there she gave birth to a boy. We never saw that child, and know this from-- but we knew after that they took her away with the child, probably to Auschwitz. We don't know.

What else sticks out in your mind from the first few months of the war, before the formation of the ghetto? Is there anything else that you can think to mention that you--

I could think that my father approached us. We should leave Poland to go to Russia, like many other people. But my mother says, if you want to-- I'll never forget. If you want to go, go. He says, so give me at least Bella, not the youngest, the next, he says. I don't have any children to give to you. If you want to go, you go by yourself. So he never went. He came with us to the ghetto.

This was the only thing that was a break in the family, but I know this, as a young girl, 13 years old, when I'm 14, that my mother said to my father, if he wants to go, he should go. She'll never go, and she won't give any children.

Why didn't she want to go?

She didn't believe the end could be like it was. Nobody did.

Tell me, please, about the formation of the ghetto.

I could tell you the way we went to the ghetto. You see on the television sometimes people going in other countries with the rucksacks, with the bags, with the things. We went to the ghetto. We occupied that sister's apartment in the ghetto, what she left from-- when my father went, she left to Demblin. She left to another town. She had a family there.

And we went to her house, so we were quite-- had a nice apartment. And we left everything, and whatever my mother

could-- and at one time only we went. That's it. We didn't come back and forth to take this stuff.

Several questions-- first, do you remember when you went to the ghetto?

It was the end of '39 because 1940 they closed the ghetto, so it must have been the end of '39 when we went to the ghetto.

Do you remember being notified that you had to move to this ghetto?

We were notified from the building as much as I remember, that all the Jews have to empty out the building, and the Gentiles-- they were left there.

What was your family able to take with them? And also, what were you able to take with you?

I had nothing, personal stuff, but I could tell you what my mother took. She took gold. I remember her sitting at night and sewing on-- the [NON-ENGLISH] they were called-- the gold, in belts. She took it with her to the ghetto. She took-- my father was in textile, and my father used to make shawls, those very heavy shawls. She took it with her in case we need something, so we'd be able to buy or to give it away.

She took with her very little. Just the main thing by us was the pillows, and the covers, and the downy, and a few pictures, but that's about it. In fact, I have a picture from my mother. That's what she took.

You mentioned that the ghetto was closed in 1940?

Yeah. We weren't able to go out.

Explain what you mean when you say the ghetto was closed.

All of a sudden, the German soldiers or the Wehrmacht-- I don't know who it was. They were around the ghetto, and nobody was able to go out from the ghetto or into the ghetto, nobody. In the ghetto, they were building a bypass because under the trolley cars were going and the cars, whatever it was there, the horse and buggies.

And we were going through a bridge. I remember building that bridge because we lived right close to that bridge. I'll tell you what had happened if you're going to ask me what happened in the ghetto. That's what I remember.

And I remember the rationing of the food. Of course, we didn't let my mother stay in the line. My sisters would. I became the strong one in the family because I figured, what they're going to do to a child? I mean, I wasn't a child anymore. By that time I was 14 years old. And I stayed in the line for food.

Was there a physical fence, or a wall, or anything around the ghetto?

It wasn't a fence, but wherever you went it was soldiers with guns. The ghetto was big. It wasn't as small. Lodz Ghetto was very big, included the cemetery out there and the-- it was quite big. And then when they were building the bridge-- so on one side it was soldiers, on the other side were soldiers. Look, there was smuggling in and out-- I remember that-- but not to us.

Were there people guarding the ghetto from the inside as well as from the outside?

No, only from the outside until they formed-- Rumkowski was the president, and then he formed your own police. They formed your own money. We had the ghetto money and the rationing, and they ghetto became a little country for itself. I worked in the ghetto.

I want you to describe for me the conditions in the ghetto at the beginning, and then we'll go through some of the changes over the years. When you first arrived in the ghetto, describe for me the conditions in which you and the other

Jewish families were living.

Just fortunately that we took cover my sister's apartment, so we were a little lucky, but the conditions became unbearable in the wintertime. We had no clothing. We had no food.

We had to go-- that's how they forced us to go to work. We should get one soup a day at least. But my older sister, who was alive-- she became very ill. Until today she has asthma. She had asthma, and she couldn't go to work. So my mother ordered us to bring [INAUDIBLE] soup for my sister. So when I went, I worked also in a [GERMAN].

Translate.

A [GERMAN] means a shop where we were sewing. We were sewing uniform for the German army, uniforms for the German army, so we got a soup a day. Because I remember we had to bring something for that sick sister. She couldn't go to work.

What about the other conditions in the ghetto at the beginning, things like sanitation and health care, everything?

Well, one thing let me tell you, which I remember very vividly. There was a [NON-ENGLISH] in the ghetto-- I don't know if you heard that word, [NON-ENGLISH]-- that ordered the children-- that ordered everybody to go out from their apartments.

When was this?

I would say 1942.

I'm going to interrupt you and have you stay first in the very beginning, and we'll work our way through the [NON-ENGLISH].

Oh. In the very beginning, we stayed for that food. The conditions became unbearable because it was nothing to get. It was cold. The winters were very harsh winters in Lodz, and we had a very smart mother. She never allow us to stay in bed. We wanted to stay in bed, that we should be warm. She says, no, you must go out. You must work. You must wash yourself. Take the snow, and wash yourself.

We had nothing, really to eat, that little things what we became. My mother smuggled in a little bit flour and sugar. This I remember. I was stealing potatoes.

From whom?

Across the street from where I lived. I don't know if I should give you the address for where I lived. [PLACE NAME] 14 was at one time a fire station, right across the street. That fire station was turned over, and they bought the food, potatoes, [INAUDIBLE], carrots, whatever they bought. They were loaded up over there.

And I was stealing. I went out, and my mother didn't say anything. I bought the potato, whatever we could. That's when I would steal. And this could be such a long process. It was bad.

And I remember one thing also. I'll never forget. I said this to my children. Across the street, where that fire station was, when Rumkowski already became the president from the ghetto, the elders from the ghetto-- we didn't call them president. And he called the whole ghetto over there, especially the parents, and he asked the parents to give up the children.

I was in front of the-- I see him now. And you know what he did before the war? He organized in Lodz a home for-- a charity-- I don't know how you say it-- a home for the children who have no parents out of the Lodz. He was a philanthropist.

How he could stay up there and say-- first of all, he says, I'm giving up all my children. They're going to go to a good place. You just put on their names, what is their names, and their ages, and when the times will come, you bring down all the children.

I disagreed with him. I cried. I said, mom, how could any parents give up the children? How could he give up the children? Then I said [INAUDIBLE]. I started to believe it. My mother didn't [INAUDIBLE].

She had to eat horse meat. She didn't want to eat horse meat, but that's all we got in the ghetto was a piece of horse meat. [? Then a doctor told her ?] God will forgive you if you eat horse meat. When I saw that my mother did this, that was the end. I couldn't believe I was seeing this. And that was the end, and I saw Rumkowski staying up there and tell the parents to give up the children with the names and the ages.

Do you remember when it was when Rumkowski made that request of the parents?

It was sometimes in '42. I don't remember dates now. It was 60 years ago.

How old were you at the time when Rumkowski made that request?

I must have been 15 years old already.

And children of what age was he--

Smaller children, small children. I remember when I see the parents bringing the children, like to a sheep, such a nice little boy. I see-- they gave away the children. We didn't know where they went, but now we know where they went.

Let's pause, and you can collect yourself, and I will change the tape also.

This is a continuation of an interview for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection with Guta Jacobson. This is tape one, side B. And you were telling me about when the children were taken, when Rumkowski made the request to take the children. I'm going to ask you to take a step back and go back a little bit in time--

Before?

--before that and explain to me how things started to change in the ghetto when Rumkowski became the man in charge, if you could go through some of the changes from '40 into '41. We haven't touched on 1941 yet.

One thing I remember, that the Germans called in my older sister to their office, and they ask her if she has a lot of gold, if she has a lot of jewelry, and she should bring everything. I have mentioned that her name wasn't Rogowitz. It was [INAUDIBLE].

They probably knew that she had a family [INAUDIBLE] in Demblin, where she went during the war. They were quite wealthy people over there. She wasn't wealthy here, but my God, that was her second part.

And my mother and we were staying by the window, and that was the end of everything. But she appeared. They just hit her. She had nothing to give to them, and they let her go. The only second thing I remember-- when they took away my mother from the group. But this is a big thing that I had to tell you.

When was this?

When there was a [NON-ENGLISH] in the ghetto.

That's 1942?

That was '42. Yeah, that was the second part of '42. This I remember. And then they said that everybody should leave

the home, and we all went in front of the house and then took out all the elderly. She wasn't-- how old was she? By then she was-- of course, she didn't have her hair and make-up like now. She was thin already after the two years being in the ghetto. She tried to give everything to my father, to us.

And my father, by that time, was away already. They took him away.

When?

Oh, yes, there's another thing I have to tell you. That was Passover, 1941, when they said all the strong men should register themselves, and come [PLACE NAME] there was a place in Lodz, [PLACE NAME] and the register to work. We're going to give them work. And my father-- it was Passover. He had nothing to eat. He was a very husky, very good-looking man. [INAUDIBLE]. He was not such a [INAUDIBLE] tall, beautiful.

And he went off to [INAUDIBLE] and they that took him away. I'll never, never forget this. My mother had a few potatoes with water, so she boiled this. And I went over there, and they allow me to give it to him. And they did take him to work. They didn't take him to Auschwitz. I don't think Auschwitz was by that time Auschwitz. I don't know what they do at Auschwitz.

And they took him away. This I'll never forget. But shortly after that, maybe six months, maybe a year after, they took away my mother, but we saved my mother.

How?

How did we save my mother? It's unbelievable even to say it. I mentioned that? No. There was one hospital in the Lodz Ghetto. I had two things with that hospital. I'm sure [INAUDIBLE].

There was one hospital in the Lodz Ghetto where we had a nurse in that hospital, and we knew that nurse. And the screaming, the crying was when we came upstairs without my mother. They took them away in open wagons, the horse and buggies [INAUDIBLE] like the cows that [INAUDIBLE].

And they ran out not far from the hospital. We said to the nurse-- I ran to the nurse because by us she was like a big doctor because she was a nurse. And she says, go to look for Mother. She knew my mother.

She took her off that things, and she hid her. And next day she brought her over here. Would you believe it, that night, that scream what went on in that ghetto? Because I told you my mother was away. Everybody's mother was taken away, and we had the mother until we took her to Auschwitz.

My mother was in Auschwitz, and I know when my mother was going to Auschwitz. I have [INAUDIBLE] with my mother. We took her 1944 to Auschwitz. Over there she was with us maybe two weeks in the barracks until Dr. Mengele make the rounds every morning, the [NON-ENGLISH]. And he took out my mother. And that's all we could see.

I'll get back to Auschwitz in a little while. I wanted to stay in the ghetto for more questions.

But we saved my mother in the ghetto. We saved her, and we took her out. And there's one more thing I want to tell you about the ghetto. There was a time, 1943, when typhus was raging in the ghetto, typhoid. And my sister, Bella, my middle sister-- she got a very high fever, and she had typhoid.

And then we had to take her away from the house because this is a very contagious sickness. They took her to that hospital. We had that nurse in that hospital. When it became a little dark, this girl-- I was maybe 15 years, maybe 15 and a half. I went through that bridge, walked to the hospital, took her out from the hospital with typhoid, with a very high, burning fever-- that was the things they said in the height of typhoid.

Somebody lived in the other side of the bridge. I hid her in that house, but they all were afraid because it was typhoid.

But I hid her. I went home because my mother thought that they killed me, so I couldn't leave my mother already in that situation. I went home through that bridge with the soldiers downstairs dressed in white, in a uniform, and the nurse-- they didn't do nothing to me.

And I told my mother that I hid her here, and the next day I went, and I brought my sister back. And she recovered from the typhus. She's still alive. [INAUDIBLE]. She's still alive. This I remember from the ghetto.

Was that the story about the bridge that you wanted to tell me?

Yes. Who ever thought that you could pass that bridge in the evening? But I had to go when it's dark because in the daytime it was even worse, and I went in that white uniform.

How'd you get the white uniform?

From that nurse. I remember her [INAUDIBLE]. I wasn't afraid. I wasn't afraid in Auschwitz either.

During your time in the ghetto, what did you know about what was happening outside the ghetto?

Nothing. I had no knowledge that there is underground. I had no knowledge of these things. I had no knowledge that people were listening to radios and things. Later in the ghetto I heard about it-- later, in Auschwitz, but in the ghetto I had no knowledge.

When Jews came from smaller towns and were put in the ghetto, tell me what changes happened in the ghetto because of this influx of people and also what news came with these people when they came.

Well, everybody had told they came from GÅ,owno. From around Lodz they came into the ghetto. Everybody told how their parents were taken away, how the property was taken away. It was even worse because the hunger became more and more unbearable.

We had to go to the shops because of the hunger. It was a little, maybe, warm in the shops than in the house. It was a terrible life, terrible life. Anybody could imagine what a ghetto is.

I want you to imagine and use the words to explain to me what I would see if I were to walk on the streets of the ghetto in 1941 or '42.

You would see people walking in daze, daze, hungry. If you would come in the wintertime, their feet were swollen. I saw these people sitting in front of their homes. If anybody would walk in, like you, and didn't know that you are in a ghetto, you would say, these are crazy people. They belong to crazy homes.

They were not crazy. These people had no future. These people were waiting to die. They were praying to die. I saw them in the ghetto. They was taking them out to the cemetery from the streets. They were dying. I said, I'm not going to die. I have to see the destruction of Hitler, and then let them take me away. And that's how I survived.

I did another thing. Every day when I-- it was already springtime or summertime. When I left the shop, I went to the cemetery and got-- [NON-ENGLISH], they called this. They would call this here spinach, but it was not spinach like here. It was that green thing that was grown there. It was not poison.

My mother used to have a [INAUDIBLE], and she cooked this. And she gave that to eat, not knowing that it had a lot, a lot of vitamin in it. And we ate this, and nobody went from my household, from my sisters and mother. I went every day from the shop into the [NON-ENGLISH] and brought a little things. But there were time in the wintertime when this didn't grow anymore, so we didn't have it.

But soon the spring came. This grows in spring. I showed my children what this is. My daughter used to live in Wheaton, and I took her to the woods. And I showed her what this is. And even I showed her how you could survive in

that woods because I wasn't [INAUDIBLE] how you survive in the woods.

We'll get to that a little bit later. Were there Germans in the ghetto trying to maintain order or actually maintaining order?

No, Jews maintained the order.

Did Germans ever come in?

I saw them from far away, walking around, watching us, but they were afraid to come into the ghetto. It was typhus. It was germs. It was death in the ghetto. I never really saw them except when I passed the bridge or when I saw them walking on the [INAUDIBLE] close to a big street that [INAUDIBLE].

You mentioned before [NON-ENGLISH], and I asked you to wait until it was the appropriate time. Can you explain what [NON-ENGLISH] means, what the word means, and also explain the context?

[NON-ENGLISH] means that-- in that day, nobody was allowed to be in this street, nobody. There was instant killing went the-- that's when the Germans came around. Then was the time when they told us to go downstairs from the houses, and they went upstairs to look in the houses, if they would find somebody. We went down. That's when they took away my mother, when [INAUDIBLE].

Say, 8:00 at night, nobody was allowed to go out when they took away the children. Nobody. That's a [NON-ENGLISH]. That's what I thought [NON-ENGLISH] were. That's what I could tell you.

Tell me about the ghetto after the children were taken.

The parents were walking around in the street. One was happy because my child will have something to eat. One said, they will have to kill them all. But the main thing-- the lies from my elders there, from Rumkowski. I couldn't take that. As stupid as I was and not educated, I couldn't take that. I knew that these children are not going to be alive. That was the [NON-ENGLISH]. That was when they took away the children, and they showed he was the first one to give up.

But we didn't go with the children in Warsaw. He went with the children. He also was in his position, and he went with the children. What was his name? It was--

Let's stay in Lodz.

I don't remember [INAUDIBLE].

Did the people, including yourself, have any idea about the camps, Chelmno and Auschwitz?

No, no, no, no. When they had the idea-- and it came to me, the idea, so I figured, if it came to me, the idea, everybody else must have it. When the wagons came back from Auschwitz-- not everybody went at one time-- people left notes in these wagons not to come, that this is destructive, that they're burning the people, they're taking away the people. Some people didn't want to believe.

I believed, but I had no choice because, look, my husband was in the ghetto from the 500 from the people. He was my husband at that time. I met him after the war. He didn't go to Auschwitz.

You're jumping ahead of me again. You're talking about the people who were left behind in the ghetto for the cleanup. You're jumping ahead of me. You had said that Rumkowski was similar to-- he was a philanthropist, and he had run an orphanage, like Janusz Korczak. When you said he was going to give up his children-- you said this twice, and I just would like you to clarify, at this point, who was he referring to when he said "his children"?

Well, he was running before the war [NON-ENGLISH].

An orphanage?

An orphanage home, and he was a philanthropist. Rich people gave money to that. That was only Jewish people.

Did he--

He gave this up.

Did he give up anybody from his family?

He had no children. I don't know if he gave up his-- he had a wife, but he had no children. One of his children in the [NON-ENGLISH] was my brother-in-law, Leo Jakubowicz. He has that exhibit in-- that was his child, but he wasn't a child anymore.

You have to explain what you were just talking about with respect to an exhibit.

Look, my brother-in-law, Leo-- you said you know him. He has the exhibit here in Washington.

You need to explain that for the interview because people who are listening don't understand what you're referring to.

All right. He was one of Rumkowski's children in Lodz but years back because his mother became a widow with three children. She couldn't support the children, so Leon went to Rumkowski's-- to his children. And the younger brother was left with the mother. The little brother was left with the mother, and the younger brother, which was my husband, Jakub-- he was left with that family.

But we're not talking about this. We're talking about Leo. When Leo came to ghetto, he was one of Rumkowski's children. Rumkowski knew him very well, but he was not a child which was that baby. He was already a grown-up man by that time. But he was with Rumkowski.

Now, you made reference to the exhibit, so you might as well explain now what the exhibit is that is now currently in the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC.

Since this man was very, very talented, you know what he did in the Lodz ghetto, this man? He was not my brother-in-law at that time. I wasn't married. He formed a kitchen, and the people who work for the Germans and who are [INAUDIBLE]-- they had eight days in that kitchen, and he was the head from that kitchen. He also developed, with help from plumbers I think, a dishwasher in that kitchen, which was unheard of.

He was also the head from the mennica. You know what mennica is, where they make money in Washington? How you call that?

The Mint, the printing.

Yeah, the Mint print. He was the head of the-- because he was Rumkowski's child. He knew Rumkowski. What he did for Rumkowski-- he did the whole sketch from the ghetto. Look at it today. Picture-- this is in miniature. You could close it off, and it's like a violin, a big violin. It's around the Jewish star we were wearing.

He went from one-- he has all the money. He has all the original signatures from the resort, from the shops. All over the ghetto is there. You have the police. You have the-- I could even show you where I lived. Every house is in miniature, and the streets, and the cemetery, and everything what was in the ghetto it is there in miniature. This was made for Rumkowski.

You got the bread, another bread, Leo [NON-ENGLISH]. He never gave it to Rumkowski because he always said, it's not finished. So you could find where the Germans were, where I lived, where you lived, where everybody lived you

could find. That bridge you're going to see. That's very important to me because what I went through with the bridge. That's important. You could find this.

So now you're going to ask me-- he went to Auschwitz. Why he didn't took this with him to Auschwitz, you probably will ask me. Everybody took everything, and this is such a valuable thing. That man probably knew he was-- I didn't know him, and I knew my husband at that time. He probably knew that he was going. He came one transport before Rumkowski to Auschwitz.

He left it in his house-- listen-- with a big sign, open-- he didn't hide it-- whoever find this, it's very valuable. Give this to authorities, to higher authorities. Being that my husband was left in the ghetto with the 500 people, he went to his house, and he saved this. When Leo came back-- it was fortunate that he did come back from Auschwitz-- he gave it back. And we wanted this to go to Yad Vashem. My husband had a big [INAUDIBLE], very big [INAUDIBLE], and finally he gave it to this museum.

So this is currently part of the permanent exhibition?

Yeah, those are, yeah. But you could see everything there, every little money what we had, every little house, every little shop, everything. Every street you could see there. That's very valuable. Now, after that, he became my brother-in-law.

I wanted to ask you to reflect back on when the deportations to the camps began, your first recollections of people being deported out to what you now know was Auschwitz.

My mother-- then we had a little idea that we going, but they told us-- they even gave us bread when we went on the-- I went very late. We were hiding, too. In the ghetto we were hiding. My mother was hiding, but at the end she couldn't hide anymore.

You need to explain how you were hiding and where, if you could describe the circumstances.

In the home, in the homes. We were hiding in our home. In the attic we were hiding. But everything was empty already. First they took us with the shops. Then that took us the leftovers until we went to the trains.

What can I tell you? That's how we went. We went very late to the trains. And then it was empty. We didn't even believe that-- after the war, I found out that there was 500 left there. We didn't know that.

When were you sent out of the Lodz Ghetto?

The end of '44, in October, in August or October, in '44, the end of '44, not even the end [INAUDIBLE]. I have to show you. Come close.

OK, you want to pause and show me something.

Yes.

OK, I think that we've established that you went when?

In August '44.

How were you notified that you would be going?

The Jewish people, the police, and everybody were looking all over if there's nobody hurt and everything. We had no more food, so we decided that this time we're going to go. We took all our possessions. My mother was sewing that gold. I'll never forget this. And we went. Not knowingly.

So you said you took your possessions. What possessions did you still own at this time?

We only owned the gold, and clothes, and then watches, and whatever we owned. In fact, I was very mad that my mother didn't give this away. We should have food. We would get very mad. But that's what it was.

Did you ask her why she didn't sell these--

No, no, no. No, she was my mother.

During your time in the ghetto, did you have any idea about what was happening in the Warsaw Ghetto?

No. We had family into Warsaw Ghetto. My mother had a sister in the Warsaw Ghetto, and I had cousins in the Warsaw ghetto. We didn't know nothing.

Did you have any idea what was going on with respect to the war effort?

No, no.

To the best of your knowledge, do you know anybody who escaped from the ghetto and survived that way?

I'm going to tell you something. I know who escaped from the ghetto. I had a very, very religious girl friend, very Hasidic father. Her sister went out with a Polish soldier. He stole her from the ghetto. He took her away. Notice that when I came back that she was alive. She was the one who smuggled into the family food.

We went over, and she gave us, and she smuggled into the family-- and she was alive. She I know, but with the help from a Polish soldier because he fell in love with her. And religious or no religious-- in fact, I remembered that there was a [INAUDIBLE].

Before I let you leave the ghetto, I want you to stop and think for a moment if there's anything else that you want to tell me about your years in the ghetto. Again, you were in the ghetto from--

'40 to '44.

Is there anything else that stands out in your mind? Certainly you had many, many experiences during those years, but anything you want to add?

Nothing special. The only thing-- towards the end, in the shop, I was chosen-- when a garment came down from upstairs, we were chosen by-- three girls. And we had to put our initials, that we look at the garments, that it was no sabotage, like a button wasn't missing or one arm was left. And my mother was terribly afraid that I had to put my initial on these garments, but I was chosen. I couldn't say no. That was very vivid to me, and I was terribly afraid to go to the shop. But that's what I did.

Had there been many acts of sabotage like this?

Yes, there was, not when I looked at the government and went through my--

If you found a government that had been sabotaged, what steps did you take?

I put my mind to it. I would not let it go through because it wouldn't be only my life but who knows how much they would-- who did it, what hands they went through.

You said that you had been in hiding, and then you decided to just go?

That's in the ghetto?

Right.

Oh, I didn't decide it. My mother decided.

You collectively-- I'm sorry. I should--

We all went. We went.

Tell me about what happened from the time you left. Your mother decided to go. Tell me about how you were collected and organized the transport.

We left the hidings. We went to the [PLACE NAME]. It was the things, and they were very nice to us. They gave us bread. They took us out with the trains-- to the big trains, and we were shoved on the trains like cattles.

And we were going to Auschwitz, about 24 hours riding that train, until we saw [? arbeitslager ?]. So it wasn't so bad. What were used to work. I was [INAUDIBLE] in the ghetto. But we personally really didn't know what's Auschwitz or the other camps.

When you arrived in Auschwitz, what were your first impressions? I want you to think about what you could see, what you could smell, what you could hear. What were your impressions?

My impression was when they told us to undress, give everything away, and shave our heads-- my head wasn't shaved-- shaved our heads. I figured, now they look like crazy people. They shaved my mother's head. They looked like crazy people.

So we're now in a crazy house. And then they said, links, right, left and right, and to us they says, you go left, you go left, to me and to my sisters, and we schleped my mother into the-- he turned over, and we [INAUDIBLE].

So we took her to the [INAUDIBLE]. Then they give us a shower. So I was terribly afraid of that shower. They gave us something to dress, shoes, long shoes, big shoes. And they took us to a barrack.

What I encountered in that barrack-- it was unbelievable. There was a dark woman, and she wasn't a German woman, and she told us where we are, what is there to expect, and we should listen to her, otherwise we're going to die right away. And I figured, this is a Jewish girl. And we were laying on the floors, [INAUDIBLE]. That was Auschwitz.

I'm going to pause to change the tape. Just one moment.