

You put the volume about here. Now, speak in the normal voice. You were their age when it happened?

Yeah, well, must I say my name? Should I say--

No, I'm just testing. Say anything.

Right. Right.

The weather.

That's right. No, like I might as well say I was in Auschwitz.

You have a quiet voice. In Washington before--

I've been here about 20 years ago for a day, on a day trip.

Just one day. OK.

OK, will you give your name first?

Yes. My name is Janet Davidson. My married name is Janet Davidson. My maiden name is Gisi Feldinger. I was born in Munkacs, lived in Munkacs, and I was taken to Auschwitz from Munkacs. I went--

I'll just interrupt to state the date. It's the 13th of April, 1983, and we're at the Convention Center in Washington, DC. All right, go ahead.

I was taken from Munkacs with my family to Auschwitz. Unfortunately, nobody, except myself, has come back from Auschwitz. I was taken from Auschwitz to Gleiwitz, where we were working in a factory 12 hours a day, through the day or through the night.

From there, we were taken to Ravensbrück. From Ravensbrück, we were taken to Rechlin. And from Rechlin, we were taken-- we were supposed to go to Malchow.

I had a friend with me who we thought to be sisters, camp sisters. In those days, we called it lager schwester, that we won't part. We marched and traveled on trucks.

This was 1940 or--

1944.

'44.

Yes.

You had managed to stay out.

Yes, well, the Hungarians-- because Munkacs was taken by the Hungarians. It was Czechoslovakia before.

But you were in Hungary.

The Hungarians had taken Munkacs.

I see.

And after Auschwitz, as I said, we went to these camps. And on the way from Rechlin to Malchow. I felt I had enough, and I didn't want to carry on. And I suggested to my friend that we escape, which, luckily and fortunately, managed to do so. As the transport--

You made an escape.

As the transports were marching, we just lay flat and hoped for the best.

Transport from where to where?

From Rechlin to Malchow. We escaped.

You were transported--

To another camp.

In a truck?

Into another camp.

In a train?

No, we were walking.

Walking.

We were walking. And, of course, we had the SS guarding us, but we took a chance. We just lay flat, hoping for the best.

Beside the road.

Yes. Yes. It was like a ditch.

Oh.

And so we were very lucky they didn't notice us. And when the transport passed, we got up, and we started to walk. And we met up with other people who had the same idea. About seven of us met.

What month was this in '44?

That was April the 28th. We were three days wandering. Again, wandering Jews, wondering what we should do. But it was towards the end of the war.

We heard the shooting going on, and the opposite, there was a big forest. And we decided to stay in the field, and we managed to survive those three days.

And we were told that the fellow who was watching, the watchman, wants-- every time, somebody else each day, 24 hours, watchdog. They came back to say, we are free. We are free.

The bridge between the one place to the other was bombed, but the Russians were liberated. They liberated.

The decision was we were wondering should we go to the forest, should we stay here, which is a better hiding place? But the men, they were wiser than we were. And they said, look, there's going to be some shooting. We are safer here.

So we stayed there.

Afterwards, we walked through corpses, and it was hard to believe that it's true that we are actually free, walking--

What corpses?

Jewish corpses from the camps.

From the people who had been in your group--

Yes, yes.

--walking from one camp to the other, where subsequently--

Some were shot. Some were-- we don't know how they died, but we were just running. We couldn't believe, looking over our shoulders, not believing that it's actually true that we are on our own and nobody is following us.

Yeah.

So then we went on a wooden-- I don't know what they call it, a thing around-- across the river. They took us across the river to the village.

Another bridge.

There was a river. No, the bridge was bombed.

Bombed, yeah.

So we went on a wooden-- I don't know what you call it in English. [HUNGARIAN]

What is it in Yiddish?

[HUNGARIAN] they call it in Hungarian. A raft.

Oh, a raft.

Yes, we went across, and a number-- we weren't the only ones. We met up with other people, and we went into the first house that we came across. We all went in there, settled down. And, of course, I started to raid the pantries in search for some food.

And we stayed there a couple of days. Unfortunately, they were all carrying germs with them, and they took care of-- this friend--

Now, how many of you were there?

There were about seven.

Seven.

And the one particular friend, who was my lager schwester. She took ill. The very next day, she got flecktyphus. And the others moved out, because they knew that it's very, very--

Typhus.

Yes, very dangerous and very contagious. That was a question I had to answer. Am I going to leave her here and die isolated, or am I going to stay with her and try to save her life?

My other friend said, you're crazy. You're free. Maybe somebody from your family is back. Why are you staying? I said, because I feel I'll have it on my conscience, as if I would have killed my lager schwester.

So my decision was-- I'm sure the almighty was the one who answered the question, because to this day, I don't know how I could make such a decision. I stayed with her.

That's really--

The others went away. And I tried to treat her. I stole a bicycle, which we called organizing. And I happened to find--

There was nobody in this house.

Nobody was there. It was a little village burned down.

I went to a so-called hospital-- military hospital-- where the Russians were there. I spoke a bit of Russian, and I told them I have a sister who's very ill. They gave me all kinds of medication. What it was, I don't even know.

And eventually, I managed to get hold of a Russian doctor from the hospital and begged him to come. If he doesn't come, he should know he killed two people, because she's the only one I have left.

He came, and he gave her an injection. And she-- because one night, she was absolutely almost finished. Her pulse literally stopped.

Yeah.

Anyway, we managed to save her. And I used to go to the hospitals, taking medication and all sorts. And to my amazement, I found these friends who I met. They were all with typhoid in that hospital. And I was the only one who did not get it.

And I asked the nurse to tell me. Is it possible--

Typhoid, typhus-- it's the same thing?

It's typhus. In English, they call it typhus-- typhus, actually they call it. In English, they call it typhus-- flecktyphus. That is a particular illness which they usually get, the soldiers, you know, in places like that.

So I asked her, is it possible that I will survive without getting the illness? She said impossible. It is so contagious. And I slept with this friend in one bed. I nursed her.

And they were all in that hospital. One died, a girl from Sosnowiec. And I was the only one who didn't get it. From there, she afterwards became-- she got malaria, and the doctor said, I've got to get her to the hospital, because she can't be treated privately here.

Eventually, she did go into that hospital, and that's where we parted. She was taken to recuperate to another place, and I went back to Prague.

And the Russians had come across you.

Yes.

While you were escaping.

Yes. Yes. Unfortunately--

And one minute you left the SS--

Yes. The Russians were there.

Then the next few days, the Russians were.

Yes, but it was a very sad awakening, because our liberators were not exactly liberators. It was terrible, too terrible to describe, the fear that we had to have from the Russian soldiers. They were raping, irrespective whether it's-- they could see we are from camp, no hair on our heads, and still with the uniform of the uniforms, and they knew no mercy. They were taking people to work. And that's nothing. People didn't mind to go to work.

But I had a very bad experience. I slept every night in the cellar. And when I said to him, look, I can't go to work, I've got here-- I had a letter from one of the hospital doctors, saying, look, my sister is dangerous dying. She's very ill.

So he said, well, you are not. She is. She doesn't have to come to work, but you have to.

What kind of work?

To the airport, all sorts of-- I don't know, whatever. Whatever. But I only went once, and after that, I was hiding in the cellar. They couldn't find me. After that, now I would like to--

And the soldiers were raping everybody all the time, continuously.

Yes, yes, yes. It was living under fear, and then eventually I managed to get to Prague.

And not killing.

No, no, no, no, no.

You didn't have to have babies that you didn't want.

No, no, no, no. I mean, I don't know what happened to these people, because thank God, I wasn't one of them. I was hiding. Every night, I was sleeping in a cellar, hiding.

I remember we once slept in one particular room. A few of us were putting scarves around our heads and all sorts of-- to make us look as we were very old women. You know, it was really-- it was very, very frightening.

You had been-- you then lost weight.

Yes, of course.

How long were you in the lager?

Well, it was from--

Lagers.

The lagers. It was from April until the following year, about a year.

April 40--

'44 till April '45.

So this escape that you're talking about--

Was the end.

Was in '45.

Yeah, that's right, '45. Yes, of course.

At the very end of the war.

Yes. In May, May the 2nd.

So you had one year that you had survived.

Yes.

So I think we should maybe go back.

Yes. I'll start off with Auschwitz.

Do you want to take a rest?

No, no, no.

OK.

When we came into Auschwitz--

Wait a minute.

Transports were taken from a site where there was brick manufacturing.

Oh, wait a minute.

From there, they were taking us in transports.

Let me just say, now we're covering the year between going into the lager and the escape. That is the year between about April '44 and April '45.

Yes. Yes. Now, we were taken from Munkacs in transports on open tracks to Auschwitz. I remember very vividly. I was on the same transport with my mother and sister and the rest of the family where some people were very, very downhearted and frightened, and it was my mother who turned round.

And she said, children, what's the matter with you? Have the [NON-ENGLISH]. What are you so frightened? We're in God's hands. We won't be killed. All we'll have to do is to work. Don't despair. So we'll work. It doesn't matter. Don't be so downhearted.

That kept me right through the camp, her faith, and only the faith that she installed in me to the last moment that I left her. That kept me right through the camps.

Even though, in fact--

In Auschwitz, when people used to despair, I used to say to them, you know, we shouldn't despair. We are going to live. I don't know how. Don't ask me how.

And they used to think I'm crazy. How can we survive? If the Germans win the war, they will kill us. If they don't win the war, they certainly will kill us.

I said, I don't know how, and I don't know when, and I don't know why. But we have to carry on and not lose hope. And these were the words of my mother that kept me right through to this day. And nothing-- no physical strength, no food, nothing-- could have kept me alive except that faith in the Almighty.

From Auschwitz, from the very beginning, I carried some photographs in my shoes. That's about all I was concerned about. People were carrying all sorts of bags, and foods, and possessions. I was only concerned to have the photographs.

Of course, everything was taken away from us. The story's been told so many times that I'm not going to go into details about that.

Well--

But they shaved us. They took everything, our shoes, clothes, the lot. And they were just handing us odd clothes and so on. We marched into the camps.

I was in Birkenau, which is in Auschwitz, which was called Vernichtungslager. From there, there were--

First Auschwitz, then Birkenau.

No, Birkenau was in Auschwitz.

Was in Auschwitz.

Yes.

Excuse me.

Yes, yes. They had the various camps. This particular camp that I was in was C lager, which means C lager. And that was called Vernichtungslager.

Means annihilation?

Annihilation lager. Because from there, they took mostly to the gas chambers. There were selections every day.

You still had your family?

No, no, no, no. We were parted. Before we were going into the gates of the camps, there were lines with mothers, and children, and old people. I carried my sister's little girl, who was two years old, until I came face to face with Mengele. It was Mengele--

Oh, you did.

--who was selecting, making the selections. Some of the inmates, the men who helped to take away the clothes and whatnot, they were shouting in Yiddish, give you children away. Get the kinder away. Get away the kinder. Get away the kinder.

We thought, they're mad. We didn't know what they're talking about. And, of course, we were holding on to the children. Who would give away their children? We didn't know what they were talking about. As I came--

These were Jewish people.

Jews, inmates-- inmates who were working at the railway.

Yeah.

Of course, most people-- I mean, they didn't. I was hanging on to my little niece. And as we came, I was facing Mengele-- saw from a distance tracks, where the old people and mothers with children were loaded--

Mothers with--

Children-- loaded on those trucks. So for a split second, I thought, now, why should I go on a truck and my older sister should walk? So at the last minute, I literally threw the child in her arms. She should go and come.

Little did I know what happened, and it happened to my cousin, who a single girl carried one of the children of her sister. Of course, she never came back. She went to the gas chamber.

So the reason that the Jewish people--

I'm alive.

--were telling you get away the kinder--

Because otherwise, I go to the gas chamber.

Because otherwise, you all go with the child.

They did.

And if you don't have a child--

Thousands.

--then you might survive.

Innocent, young, strong people were taken, just because they helped a child, our neighbors or sisters or so. So I was lucky, and I went into the camp.

And then you never saw any of your relatives--

No.

--after that point.

I mean, some of the people who were there a long time, they told us, you know, this is a camp where you come in through the gate and you go out through the chimney. They showed us the smoke from the crematoria.

Of course, it was hard to believe for a while. But afterwards, when these selections took place, we believed it. We smelled the smoke. We saw the flames.

I settled into a block, number 10. And again I was fortunate. I volunteered and pushed to do some voluntary work. Because they needed people who were carrying the food in to distribute the food for the inmates. Once a day, we were given food, some concoction of leaves, and brome, and all sorts of things.



Brome?

Bromide they put in so that-- I don't know whether to dope us or what.

Medical.

Yes.

Bromide, yeah.

There were 14 people in a bunk and 1,000 people in a one block. I don't know how many blocks there were, but I was a number 10 block. And they picked about 8 or 10 girls who were handing out the food, who made sure the people don't get out of their bunks, who made sure when they were having this, what they call, Zahlappell in German. Every morning, twice a day, they were counting the people to see nobody escaped.

If it didn't tally-- the number didn't tally in that block, one or two were missing, sometimes they went to visit to the next block. They used to keep us waiting for hours, and if it didn't tally, we were on our knees.

Outside.

Outside.

If it didn't tally, you were on your knees.

They said, if we don't tell where this person is, we don't know-- nobody knew. Sometimes they just went visiting the next block.

Yeah.

But we were kneeling or standing for ages until the SS came, counted up, and it was OK. Then we went back.

The people on the bunks were not allowed to walk around. They had to sit there. If they wanted to go to the toilet, the stubendienst-- I was a stubendienst. And I'm proud to say it. Because this young lady you just saw here, I saved her mother in Auschwitz.

It was one of the selections that took place. The stubendiensts had to make a ring holding hands. And when they took those that were selected for the gas chambers, they put them in that ring. And we had to make sure that they don't escape.

And when I saw this girl, Spielman, in that ring, and her mother the two sisters screaming. I had-- I was holding hands with other Hungarian girls, and I tried to get my hand freed. I should throw that girl out. I couldn't bear to see her go to the gas chambers. We were responsible, because if one is missing, that they selected 10 or 15 and one is missing, then whoever let that person go is going instead.

Yeah.

But again, I don't claim credit for this because it was the almighty. I was just a shaliach there, who made me absolute levels. While I tore my hand out from that girl's hand, I grabbed hold of this person as a living witness and just threw it into the arms of her mother's and sisters. Get out.

This was what, inside the building or outside?

No, outside, from the outside, from the outside.

And there would be like half a dozen stubendiensts there?

Yes, holding hands.

In a ring?

Yes.

In the daylight?

In the daylight, in the morning.

So they didn't see you?

I took this-- I took that girl, and I threw her out. And then when they came to collect from each block--

Yeah.

--those that were going to the gas chambers, the day of reckoning came. If they would have counted and see that one is missing, these Hungarian girls told me, we are going to tell it was you, because we are not going to die for anybody.

Right.

I didn't care. I didn't think. I don't know what. I was hypnotized myself by the thought. I can't. That's it. I keep on coming back again. It was the Rabboni Shalem who did that, not me. I can't claim any credit. Because I don't think anybody in their right mind would do this. I mean, there was no way, no chance, no way.

Baruch Hashem.

To think-- to think that I could survive this. They came to collect the others. They went. Nobody counted, anything.

They didn't count.

No.

Just by chance.

Just by chance, they didn't count. And that girl survived. I didn't know for years and years until I came home to America, and I heard, because she went to other camps in America. I mean, she was saved from that particular transport to the gas chambers, until one day I met her mother. And then she wrote to me. I still have letters where she says that every week when she lights the candles and shutters, she mentions my name. And, of course, they were grateful. But I was grateful. I know that I have a child, a Jewish child who was saved.

And I must tell you a little story that I was married, and I have three sons. My oldest son was 18 months old. We went on a journey to Manchester.

The car suddenly flew open and the child fell out of my lap onto the road. We were doing 50 miles an hour. And that child was saved. There was no car coming. My first thought that came to my mind, I saved somebody else's child, and here is your reward.

Being paid back.

Here is my reward.

I have been in touch, of course, with this girl's mother. And they haven't--

Have you given-- do you want to give their names?

Yes. Yes. Her name was Spielman [PERSONAL NAME]. She is now Mrs. Randt, who has a daughter is doing fantastic work. She lives in Washington.

Randt?

Mr. and Mrs. Randt. Yes, she worked for the government.

R-A-N-D?

Yeah.

D-T, I think.

R-A-N-D-T.

And she has now three children, beautiful children. And I met her for the first time in Florida. And her little children came up to me and said thank you for saving my bubbe. I saved her mother. And I can't express. There are no words that express the feeling, that I saved that girl. And here is a doll and another doll from Jewish children for any nation to be proud of.

I am here now because my son-- I live in England. I didn't know about this gathering. I did go to the world gathering of survivors in Jerusalem--

Jerusalem.

--three years ago. But I am here because my son, Martin Davidson, who lives in New York. When he heard about this gathering, he didn't ask any questions. He registered me. He had everything arranged, and he said to me, Mommy, I have a surprise for you.

And, of course, because of him, I came here to Washington. I am really happy, privileged to be here to witness the memorials, and the gathering, and in particular, the young people that turned out. This is the most important thing.

We know and we will remember. We can't forget, even if we would want to forget. But it is the young people that it is important that they should remember.

And it was heartwarming to see also what the American government, can I say, and the non-Jewish people, how they are involved. It is heartwarming to see that we are not completely isolated, and that we are not forgotten. And the next generation won't allow us to be forgotten. And I am grateful to the Almighty that I am here, and I was spared and privileged to see this.

Do you ever go to Israel?

To Israel? I've been 25 years ago. And I go there, and we bought an apartment there. I am very involved with the Soviet Jewry work. When England, with only about half a dozen people, tried to do something for Soviet Jewry, I volunteered.

In London?

I said to them-- yes, in London. I was with the 35 group, which they are now very well known all over the world. There were about five or six of us. I was there to meet some Russian [NON-ENGLISH], to meet them.

But when people said, why are you doing this, what will it help, I said, look. This is exactly what happened when we were in trouble. I feel, whether I'll help, whether it won't help, let them know that somebody is with them.

Yeah.

How I'm not doing it? And I became very involved. And I am so to this day. I went about three weeks ago to the World Conference for Soviet Jewry to Jerusalem. I went to about five or six years ago to the Brussels conference, World Conference on Soviet Jewry.

I represent-- I made sure that our Emunah organization, that I am very active. I got them involved in work for Soviet Jewry. I am their representative, the Emunah organization's representative for Soviet Jewry. And we are sending books to Russia once a month every month regularly and write.

And we are very involved. And I-- that is my appreciation to show to the Almighty, that I don't take the attitude I am OK, Jack. I am OK, Jack, Baruch Hashem. I'm blessed with a wonderful husband and lovely three boys, who all went to Israel to the yeshivot.

I studied at universities. I went to yeshivot in Israel, and they are involved. They are from boys, every one of them. I'm very proud of them, and I'm grateful to the Almighty I live to see.

And I feel that every Jewish person, they don't have to be children of survivors, as long as they carry their name and they are Jewish. They should try at all times to help their Jewish fellow man in every possible way. And not to just volunteer, that nobody can give you a guarantee that it's going to help. Try.

And if everybody would have tried at the time when we were in trouble, I don't think that we would all be saved, but I'm sure that a lot of us-- a lot more would have been saved.

I would like to quote Elie Wiesel's speech today. Out of all the speeches, I remember the two words that he said. If they would have bombed the trucks for one day, even only 10,000 would have survived that day. Just think. Out of those 10,000, how many good [NON-ENGLISH] we would have brought up?

I am proud of this one person that I saved. Actually, I saved two, because this lager schwester-- if I would have gone with the others and left her on that bed dying, the burned village--

Yes. Yeah.

--she would have not survived.

Right.

So I really gave my life. I risked my life. Because if I would have taken ill, that this illness--

You risked your--

No way could I have been saved.

You risked your life twice.

I wouldn't have survived.

And each time you saved one person.

So I have two lives that I, with the help of the Almighty--

You should get two stars to wear.

My star is-- the Almighty paid me back by having a wonderful husband and wonderful children. What more can one ask for? They should be well and carry on.

Well, now-- we got off. We didn't really continue with Auschwitz and Birkenau.

Yes.

In that year--

That was Auschwitz. That year was Auschwitz. This is what happened to me first.

Do you want to take a rest?

No, no, no. While I met them, everybody's wish was to get out of Auschwitz, because, as I mentioned before, it was the [NON-ENGLISH]-- Vernichtungslager. I was myself like what they called a Muselmann, very thin, small, and skin and bone.

A Muselmann.

Muselmann they called it. There was an-- anybody who was in camp, they know what the Muselmann is. And I had very little chance of getting out of Auschwitz.

It means an Arab.

No, a Muselmann was a description of somebody who was very thin, looked like that. They used to call it Muselmann. Why? I don't know.

In English, that's a Muslim.

No, we used to call a Muselmann in Auschwitz, said, oh, you're a Muselmann, you know? Once you are very thin, skin and bone, look like half death, you have no chance.

My only chance was because I was doing work. I was a stubendienst, and I was busy. Whenever there was a selection, I was helping to count the people, get them out on Zahlappell and things like that-- handing out the food and so on. I wanted to get out of that camp, and I had very little chance unless there's a miracle.

Because when they took the people in transport, it was one of the two things. Either they were going to the gas chambers, and those that were tall and strong, they were taken either to the front for the soldiers or to some factories.

To the front for what?

For the soldiers-- use of the-- for the services.

Oh, services. Yeah.

Some services. Anyway, we heard all sorts of stories.

Such as?

Well, you know, took the girls for the front.

Oh, the girls for the men.

Yeah.

Oh, these were women.

Yes, it was only women.

Are you just talking about the women?

Only the women's camp were separated.

Oh, my gosh.

So yeah. So we were frightened. We didn't know, should we volunteer, should we not? The volunteers sometimes, they did the trickery--

At least you lived.

--the trickery. They took some. They said, oh. They looked whether the hands are-- they looked at our fingers, hands. We didn't know what it was for. They said, oh, special work we are being taken. Then we heard rumors that were taken to the soldiers, not for special work.

Were taken--

To the front. We were told by the leaders of the camp, they were there years, the Polish people. And they were longer than us. They knew what was going on more than we did.

So I volunteered two or three times. When they picked, I said, there is a transport going. So everybody ran to get out of C lager.

And then when we saw some of the favorites of the leaders-- Jewish people, kapos or Lageralteste-- they took their favorites to the--

Kapo?

Kapo.

Everybody knows what that was. If they pushed in the transport their favorites, we knew it's probably-- they had a word. It's a good transport. So we volunteered and we pushed to get into the transport.

And just before leaving the gates of Auschwitz, we saw those favorites were withdrawn. The word went round, oy, oy, it's not so good. So we tried to fight our way out. I fought my way out about two or three times.

I mean, you would get into a transport.

And out of it quick before we go through the gate.

Into the transport, actually in a truck.

No, no, no. We were still just lined up.

Just lined up.

Lined up to be taken out of the camp, which was wired with electric wire.

And they would put their favorites in and then take them back again.

Take them out. Yes.

And that was to trick you?

No, because that was the-- that was somehow they managed to find out the transport is not a good.

Ah.

So we watched, and we listened. And we ran out.

And these were Jewish girl--

Some were--

--the favorites or Jewish girlfriends of the kapo.

Yes. Yes. So we withdrew, until one day in the camp at about-- I think it must have been about 30,000. 50 girls were wanted to be taken to Gleiwitz to a camp where they were working in factories making soot, cleaning machines, making soot which made rubber. So I tried very hard.

And my friends laughed at me. You little Muselmann, you think we'll get on? They're taking the tallest girls, the strongest girls.

I licked a few hair-- my hands to tidy my hair up a bit, pinched my cheeks, and tried to push as hard as I could. I was thrown out two or three times. But as I come from Munkacs, if we are pushed out a one door, we go through the back door. And that's what I did.

I tried and tried. On grabbed hold of me, and he says, get out. I went in through another side. And the director of that factory said to me-- those words ring in my ears-- [GERMAN]. She is OK. How old?

And I threw myself at attention like a soldier, and he pushed me through. And I went with that transport, and I think that's when I was saved, because we were working under very, very difficult condition, being, for me, more difficult than others, because it was-- I don't know the grades of the heat-- unbearable.

Unbearable heat. We were working that 12 hours either through the night or through the day.

When did you get into this factory?

I don't remember exactly the date. I don't remember the date.

What season? You don't remember? It was the week of-- in April. It must have been about three-- I was about two or three months in Auschwitz, and then we went to Gleiwitz. And we were all so black that one sister couldn't recognize the other-- completely black.

And you no longer had any relatives with you.

No. No, that's what I meant. This friend was from Munkacs, and we became lager schwestern.

The one who you later saved, the typhus.

Yes, yes. So we worked together again.

Did you give her name?

Seidenfeld, Joli, from Munkacs. Her name was Seidenfeld.

Do you know where she is?

She is not alive anymore. We met. We lost each other when she went into a sanatorium for recuperation, and I went back to Prague. And about six months later, I heard-- you know, I heard that she went back to Munkacs. But I didn't. I stayed in Prague. Because I was hoping.

There was one hope that kept me alive after camp, and that was the hope that my brother, who lived in England, in London, was alive. I knew there were bombings taking place. And his address followed every night my Shema-- 23 Colville Terrace. His address-- I had no pen to write it down. I knew once I forget his address, I just couldn't afford.

So every night, I was saying 23 Colville Terrace. I was hoping there was something to live for.

You said the Shema every night--

Yes.

--of that year.

You never stopped.

No, no, no. No, we didn't eat chametz on Pesach either. I don't know how. We drank the bit of rubbish they gave us with no bread. And we were told we mustn't throw away the bread, because they'd think it's a mutiny-- a strike or hunger strike. But we did. I don't know how, but we did.

I didn't eat bread. I didn't eat bread, just had the mush that they gave, soup with leaves and God knows what. But bread, never. There were a number of them who didn't eat.

Anyway, so I was--

Now, where were we?

In Gleiwitz.

Yeah.

In Gleiwitz.

I just was going to say, your friend, do you know where she went eventually?

Yes. Yes, she went-- I left her there when we were liberated together. I went to Prague, and she went back to Munkacs. But eventually, she found her husband.

And I heard-- I didn't know what happened, whether she's alive or not, until I lived-- I was in Southport in England. Then, I met somebody from Belgium, and she told me there was a Seidenfeld who lives in Belgium-- Antwerp.

So I said to my husband, I must get in touch. I must get in touch. I managed to find her address, and I got in touch with her, and we have met afterwards, and They moved to Israel.



Oh.

Unfortunately, she died of cancer.

So anyway, now we were in--

Coming back again to Gleiwitz, right?

Yeah.

We were in this factory. We were working there. Again, I met-- there was a kapo. I spoke a good Polish, and they didn't like the Hungarians. And I was with the Hungarian transport. But as I spoke Polish, and she liked me, I asked her, can I come and work a little extra for you for that extra bread?

She said, OK, and I used to go after we came home from work to help her clean up whatever it was. So I got a little extra bread.

Where were you sleeping?

That was in Gleiwitz. It wasn't like Auschwitz. There were some blocks, but you had better facilities. I mean, you can't compare.

And these Polish people, what were they doing?

They were there a long time, mostly people from Sosnowiec-- Polish people. They also worked in the factories, and they were mixed. There were even non-Jewish people working there. But they needed some people. They took 50 girls from C lager, from that camp, too.

After that, one day they said-- I think they were advancing. The Allies were advancing, and they took us from Gleiwitz on tracks, open tracks. We didn't know where they're taking us.

On a train or walking?

No, no, no, on open tracks, open trains.

Trucks.

Yeah, trucks.

Trucks, yeah.

There was also some German from-- I didn't mention that. It's not important. From Auschwitz, we couldn't believe. We thought it's a trickery. These 50 people, they put us on one of those same vans that they used to take them to the gas chambers.

And when we arrived outside Gleiwitz, when they stopped, all we saw was chimneys-- smoke, smoke. And we said-- we volunteered. We volunteered to go to the gas chambers.

And even I pray to the Almighty. We were so afraid, because we saw those chimneys. We were sure. I shouldn't say anything. That's the end. But it wasn't.

Now, when we went from Gleiwitz, they were taking us-- Gleiwitz was there, so they took us to Ravensbrück. And we were on trucks. I don't know for how long, no food, nothing. It was snowing heavily, and we were more thirsty than hungry.

And we made contracts with one another. I'll take your snow, and you'll take my snow. And we were eating the snow from each other's shoulder.

And we were passing through an area of Czechoslovakia. And like we are told that manna was thrown from heaven, suddenly we were hit by loaves of bread. The Czech people were outside the station. I don't know how they got to know that transports are passing by. And they were throwing bread into the trucks.

They knew that you were Jews?

I don't-- they must have done.

Yeah.

They must have done. They must have. I don't know what they knew, because I never spoke to any of them. All I know is that at one time, I tried to get a piece of bread. And he said, no, I've got to share it with so and so and so and so. And I said, right.

This friend, she was going out of her mind. They were climbing out from the trucks, little trucks. And there were guards that were shooting them. As they were climbing out, they were shooting them. They really-- they became insane.

They were climbing out, like, to get some bread.

Yes, they just lost their minds for drink. So they just-- they just climbed out. You could hear the guns shooting, shooting.

You mean this was at the moment that the bread was coming?

At the bread-- before the bread was coming.

Or just always?

All the time. After a few days, I think we were-- I don't know how many days we were traveling. And a lot of them, when the thing stops, some of them, I met them. They survived. They were lying between the truck. The guard didn't see them. Somehow, they survived.

This friend, she wanted to climb up. And I pulled her back, sit here and stay. And then bread flew in from nowhere. So I also asked, can I have a little bread? No, I've got to share it with so-and-so, so-and-so. And I thought really? That was the end. I felt my end has come. I couldn't believe it.

And at that very moment, something hit me. I caught the bread. And you know, as I tell you this story--

Just like manna.

--I asked myself, am I dreaming? Did this happen? I can't blame people who don't believe it, because it's so hard to believe. But it's true.

Yeah.

It's now nearly 40 years ago, and I can see those trucks. I can feel the bang of the bread on my lap. And we carried on until we came to Ravensbrück.

Yeah.

There we stayed only a few days. There was a lot of Ukrainians, non-Jewish people who were big anti-Semites. We were scared of really scared. Every time we find new dead bodies next to us, I said, oh, good. They're Jewish.

We were scared of them, because they were as big as anti-Semites. Although, they themselves were in camps. They hated us. I can't tell you how.

From there, we were taken by transport to Rechlin. That was a small camp. And they took us to work at the railway, work anything.

They also had bunks. And again, I was picked to divide the bread in five and hand it out in the morning. Nobody wanted the job, because there were Ukrainians there. And if they think that you've got one piece of bread bigger than the other, they'll kill you. But I got the job. And every morning when I had to cut those five pieces of bread, I felt like cutting a piece of finger with-- only not make less.

And I did manage to survive there. I didn't go working on the railways we volunteered at chopping wood, anything. The chopper was bigger than I was. I volunteered anyway, only because if you're alive-- when you're from Auschwitz, if you sit idle, there is less chance of you to survive.

So before long, we didn't stay long. We heard that the Allies were advancing again. Yet again, they took us on trucks. And we were scared to be with Ukrainians mixed up, because they would kill us all. Their hatred was so great. That's indescribable-- were absolutely petrified.

And they were--

Transported also.

--men and women?

Yes. Yes.

But you were just women.

We were women, yeah. Anyway, from there, then they took us from Rechlin. We were walking. And I don't remember where. They stopped, and then we walked, and we were in a haystack somewhere one night.

And next morning, we were-- they were transporting us. We were walking. And that's when I said to my friend, enough is enough. Dying. I don't care what's going to happen. Let's jump.

And we jumped. There was-- I would call it a ditch or something.

Yeah.

Or something. And we just went flat on our faces. They passed us, and the story I told you from--

Yeah.

Back. I'll finish up, which is also a very happy ending. I ended on a happy note. I came to Prague. I went to the War Office. I was held by one of the major--

To the War Office.

I'm at the end-- by the major generals, who--

Is this on?

Yes.

One thing.

Right. And I happened to meet there-- he was a major who became general-- Oldrich Zemek of Prague. He was an authority at the War Office.

He took pity on me, knowing that I have nobody left in the world. I was hoping that I will reunite with my brother, but I didn't know whether he's alive or not. I was just hoping.

He helped me in every possible way. He kept my photograph on the desk, even after I left Prague. He helped me to get in touch with my brother. He came and told me there is now a way that you can send messages through the radio. And he came and told me there is now a possibility to send a telegram.

I went to the post office, and I sent a telegram to my brother, to the address which I knew by heart.

Colville.

And asked anybody who listens to tell-- he was a chazzan, a Reverend Feldinger, such-and-such address in London-- that his sister is alive in Prague, waiting to hear from him. In the excitement, I did not realize till very, very much later that I forgot to put my address on.

I waited. I have never been in more despair than I was then. That was the only time when I felt I wanted to end it all, because I just didn't want to live without my brother. I didn't feel there is a purpose just to be completely alone in the world.

But luckily, again, luck was with me all the way. I moved in to a Czech, non-Jewish family. I had a little room of my own. And at the same building, on the next floor, was a gentleman who was an announcer on the radio. And I ask him, would he mind to do to announce that I am looking for him?

I found out afterwards, when I was reunited with my brother, that he was desperate to find me and my address. People said, go to the Red Cross. They usually have a book of names that are looking for relatives.

He went up there. Because as soon as-- they always listened to the radio, anybody looking for lost relatives. They said, look. There is a book. Have a look. We've got names and addresses.

Surely enough, he opened that book, and he found my name and address. And that's when he communicated with me. And he eventually brought me over to England.

What had made him go to England?

Well, he was in Czechoslovakia a chazzan. And when the Poles took Schlesien, it was a border town. And those that were Czech-born in Czechoslovakia were seven. In 24 hours, they got a notice-- written notice-- they have to leave the town. They had to go about 100 kilometers into the country, into Poland. They weren't trusted enough.

So he had to leave. I happened to be there on a vacation from Munkacs when this happened. Whilst Munkacs became Hungary, his part became Poland.

When was this?

That was in 1939, before we went to camp. So my brother moved to Krakow, and I went back to Munkacs.

And he went to England, to London, because he was one of the people. He was a priority, as he was driven out of his

home. So he was a priority amongst a quota that was allowed into England.

That was at the beginning of the war.

Yes. Well, it was-- I don't remember the month. I'm sorry.

That's all right.

So he went to London, and we were in contact-- Munkacs, London-- until camp.

Yes.

He didn't know who was alive and who wasn't. So he begged me there and then, why did you go back to Munkacs? You know, the brain was there already.

He says, come with me to Krakow, and in Krakow, we'll go to England together. But I left my mother and the rest of the family in Munkacs, and I said, no, I am going back to my mother. Whatever will happen to them, I am prepared, and let it happen to me.

But he said, when you go back, get the passport and come out afterwards. I will see. I didn't. And I couldn't save them, but the Almighty saved me.

And you were there for four years before--

Well, the trouble was going on. But I would like to mention this to people who always say it can't happen here. Because I remember standing on the street when the surrounding villages, all the Jewish people were taken on horse and cart with the little-- I don't even know what they call it in English-- taken away with their few bits of possessions from the villages to Auschwitz.

Say it in Yiddish.

Horse and carts.

Yeah, horse and carts.

Yes.

OK.

We said-- we were standing there very, very sadly, looking what's taken, what's happening. And yet, they said it happens to the villages, but it won't happen here in Munkacs. They were away-- a half an hour away from us, an hour away. And I remember they said, ah, it won't happen here.

Some people said, you know, it can help here. I said, don't be silly. It won't happen to a big town. It won't happen in Munkacs.

And only two families that I know of, Zilber and Schlissel-- two brother in-laws with their families, one had four children and the others-- well, whilst we were going into the ghettos, concentrating us on ghettos, they went down. They made themselves hiding places.

And they were saved. They didn't go to Auschwitz. They were the ones-- they said, we're not going into ghettos. They knew what's going to happen.

What kind of hiding places?

Some cellars, I don't know.

Yeah.

They hid. Eventually, a dog gave them away. But it happened at the time when everybody was already in Auschwitz. They weren't going to put a few families special in a truck to take them to Auschwitz.

So they were also caught, but somehow or other, they went to Budapest. And they had a hard time for a short time, but they all alive, thank God.

A dog--

And they are now in America. Yeah. Yes.

So nobody wanted to believe it. You know, it's one of those things. It happens to everybody in our class.

Anyway, the end of the story was that my brother brought me over to England, where I met-- he went to Manchester to the place [PLACE NAME]. And there, where I met my husband at the bar mitzvah.

We got married, and Baruch Hashem, we are happy. As I said, we've got three lovely sons, from ones. And now, I would like to just describe to you the life in Munkacs--

OK.

--before the tragedies started. Still all right?

OK, yes.

It was a town--

Give another test-- oh, it's OK. I can see it.

I'll be short.

Do you want a glass of water?

No, thank you.

The town of Munkacs is very well known. Even here in Washington, most people-- I pointed out to my husband, can you see their faces when they leave Munkacs? Oh.

We were fortunate to have a Hebrew gymnasium. I don't know of any other, even bigger towns than Munkacs. People from Czechoslovakia, from all parts, came to study in the Hebrew gymnasium.

We had a famous rabbi. We had rabbis-- famous rabbis, a yeshivot. The life-- the only other place that I find similar is in Israel. That's why when I'm in Israel, I feel at home.

There where the festivals took place, where the circus-- I don't think there was a family without a sukkah. I think the goyim shut the shops when the Jews did, because there was absolutely a standstill when the Jewish shops shut.

On a Friday, there were sirens going twice, once the siren for time to close the shops, the other one to bench licht. There was freedom beyond description. There were schools and various languages.

If it was a yontif, everybody knew. The non-Jewish people that came to the Jewish houses, I think they knew Kaddish [INAUDIBLE] by heart. They knew more about the Jewish faith and Brachot and everything than some Jewish people, unfortunately, that came out of very Orthodox families these days.

To live in Munkacs was something very, very special. I did not realize it at the time, only now. And my children know about it.

And when it was Simchat Torah, the Munkacs rabbi danced in the streets. The streets were cordoned off. And he's Hassidim. They were accompanying him right through the town. Everything stopped, traffic and all when it was Simchat Torah, when it was Rosh ha-Shana, every yontif. I mean, it was impossible not to know it. The shops were shut.

I don't think there were half a dozen shops. I mean, I'm guessing that there were open shops. I don't-- maybe. I don't remember a shop, a Jewish shop that was a shop. But the Yiddishkeit was blossoming. It was a town-- I don't think I can compare it to any other.

Of course, I never lived in any other town. But I have met people maybe in Vilna and places like that. But in Czechoslovakia, that was a very unique town.

And to this day, I'm proud to say when I meet fellow Munkacs, may they be in Los Angeles or any part of the world-- scientists, rabbonim, the parliamentarians, surgeons, merchants, manufacturers-- you name it, and Munkacs is well represented in the four corners of the Earth. And I am very proud to come from Munkacs.

We carried with us a lot of, and unfortunately not all. But a lot of us have carried faith with us, which we tried to hand down to our children. Baruch Hashem, I have managed to do that. I am frum myself, and I am happy and proud to say that my children are even frum-er than I am.

My husband went to the Gateshead Yeshiva. I had the most wonderful in-laws, just like parents. They did the same. They were fortunate enough to live in England, bring their children up in England.

And I came lonely without anybody. And God gave me the strength to put in down into my children, the faith and the Yiddishkeit And I hope God will only pay them back, because they are wonderful children. I'm only here because of them. They should carry on, and I'm sure they will hand it down to the future generations.

And I guess they have--

I would just like to finish off on a note about my two brothers. The one who saved me, he lived in Czechoslovakia. I did mention how he was saved. We were in touch. First we called.

The other one was Moishe. He was the most wonderful person amongst many other people. I speak about him, because I learned a lot from him.

When he lived in Munkacs, and the people were taking him to slave labor camps, and there were some of them that were located in our vicinity in Munkacs, whenever he went to shul and he saw some of the-- they were-- what we used call them in Hungarian, munkatabors. They were taken to slave labor camps. He never went home without making sure each one has for Shabbos somewhere to eat, somewhere to stay.

And then his wife used to say, why are you bringing me so many people? I can't cope. So he says, OK, I'll take some of them to Jewish restaurants, and I'll pay for them.

And she says, tell me. Are you the richest Jew in this town? Do you have to [NON-ENGLISH] everybody? There are so many others.

He says, I'm responsible for myself. And he made sure he went to the other barbatum and said, take somebody home for Shabbos. And those that were left, he took them to a Jewish restaurant in Munkacs so, you know, they didn't have to pay

then.

And when she said, tell me why do you have to have the responsibility for all that are left? Are you the richest man here in Munkacs? He says, you know, you're a silly girl. The possessions, what we have now, none of it is mine. I don't take anything with me. The only thing that I will take with me is what I give you.

I've always remembered that. I'm sure because of him, I was a better person and will be, and so are my children. He used to-- at the times of difficulty, he used to send to poor people. Nobody should ever know. Nobody knows to this day, but I'm sure the almighty knows. He used to send-- they used to heat with wood logs, you know? They used to heat them.

He used to send to people. They would never know who, because they were too proud. They came from very good families, but they were poor.

He used to sacrifice a lot. On Purim, he used to leave his family. He was a composer. He played, a musician, just self-taught. He played the violin beautifully, sung beautifully.

And I'm very happy to say that God has given me an adorable son. Maybe I love him a little more than the others. I shouldn't say that.

This brother is not surviving?

He was burned alive in the camp. I found out in New York from somebody. But this--

That's this song.

It was called after him, Moishe. He has two names, because my brother died young, so he's called after his zayde. He is somehow part of this brother of mine whom I loved.

So he's gone after him, and he inherited not only his nature, but he's a good guy with his heart. The music, he gives to the world so much now. He travels to various parts. He turned toward Hasidic music-- from thrillers, put it into music. He's known here. His name is Martin Davidson.

And I also have two other sons. One is Israel. He's called after my father. He's a very, very religious boy, convinced Jew. Nothing in this world could make him give up his religion. He teaches it and practices it.

Then I've got a younger son, who's studying here at [INAUDIBLE], studying in America here. He is equally frum, lovely boy. So I have a lot to be grateful for. The Almighty gave me the compensation of having a wonderful husband, like I mentioned before, and three wonderful sons.

My family, unfortunately, nobody survived. My one brother, the one who brought me to England, he passed. He went to live in Israel. He passed away about three years ago.

What else can I say? His wife, unfortunately, was married. They didn't have any children. He always sort of adopted me as his own child, because my father died when I was very young. I can't even remember my father.

My message is, again, like I said before, to carry on and try and help our fellow Jews. Never forget, and never let our children or our future generation forget.

OK.