To let it run for a second or two. OK. This is an interview of Edie Newman on April the 13th, 1983, at about 5:30 in the afternoon. And we're going to discuss her oral history. Mrs. Newman, will you tell us when you were born? It's not a fair question to ask a woman, but I have to ask you.

Yeah. It's 1917-- December 17.

In what year?

In 1918.

1918. And could you tell us where you were born?

I was born in Nowy Sacz, Poland.

And where is that in Poland?

This is right on the border to Czechoslovakia, near KrakÃ³w, on this side of the country, the other side. Here is to Russia, and here is to Czechoslovakia and Germany.

Is it near the Carpathian Mountains someplace? No.

No. No. It's directly to Slovakia.

To Slovakia.

Because it used to be Slovakia and Czechia. And then it's Czechoslovakia. It became one country.

One country. How big a city was that?

Nowy Sacz was quite a big city, considering. It's not like Washington or Philadelphia. But let's say a little smaller than KrakÃ³w, if you have an idea.

Well, that must be pretty big though.

Yeah. It was a city.

How big a Jewish population was there?

I don't know. I was so young, not interested in that.

A lot of Jews, few Jews?

Oh, more than that. Let's say, a third of the population was Jewish. Yeah, because they had even a street called the Yiddishe Gasse because it was mostly Jews lived in that street.

Was it a well-developed Jewish community-- synagogues, organizations?

A lot of them. Yeah. A lot of-- in fact, I lived on the street where the rabbis lived. And the Halberstams, which are very--

Well-known name.

--known name in Poland, the Halberstams.

Also in the United States.

Yeah, Halberstams are very well known. And of course, my father used to go to the synagogue. He was there-- my father was a religious man. And we grew up in a religious family.

How many in your family?

We were-- I had two sisters and three brothers. And that's all that's left, is one brother who, just in 1939, in September when it broke out-- never forget that. It was in the evening, the end of August 31, around 6 o'clock after dinner. Me and my friends were walking down the street. And from a cafe there was a loudspeaker from the radio.

We hear that shriek in German, "Achtung. Achtung." And it was Hitler himself, announcing regain of Poland. They're going to attack Poland. This was September-- that night, going on September 1, 1939. It was hell because, of course, when we heard Hitler, everybody ran home to their family, start running.

It was such a tremendous shriek. I can't even describe it. He must have such a strong voice. A shout, a tornado hit you. So everybody ran home. And everybody, whoever could, took cars, trucks, horses. They loaded up. They were running. It was a chaos. Nobody knew where they were going.

Of course, we didn't go nowhere. We went to my aunt's house. Rosalie Goodman was her name. And in her basement we all hid, the whole family. We went to the basement, everybody with candlelight because the basements there weren't with electricity in that year. And the whole night we stayed in the basement.

We were quiet. We were afraid to make a noise. We knew up up top there must be terrible.

Poland wasn't prepared for the war. So of course, every man of the age ran to protect his country. So not much Jews, of course, because these what I knew were too young, and the older ones were with families. But Poland didn't have any uniforms, any ammunition. Whatever they could grab, they grab, and they ran.

And they ran to wherever they ran. I wasn't even-- we weren't-- we were so concerned about our lives. We knew it's not going to be good. It's war. So we hid in the basement the whole night.

First thing in the morning-- when we were in the basement, we were hearing, like bombs were exploding. We had a great big bridge there over Dunajec, the river. Did you ever hear of it? Beautiful bridge-- and they put mines there. And this is what they were--

Blowing up.

--exploding because the Poles were running. They were running away. They knew the Germans were coming. They weren't prepared to fight. So in the morning, when we woke up-- I mean, we didn't sleep. We came out-- quiet, it was so quiet. It was unbelievable, not a sign. And as soon you got out the street you see Germans all over, Germans with the helmets.

They were there already?

They were in. They were-- there were no Polish military.

How far away were you from the border, from the German border? Oh, they came from Czechoslovakia.

They're already in Czechoslovakia. They were very close. So they just crossed the river, and here they are. In the morning they were there and all over. [? Goys, ?] they couldn't turn. This was a very Jewish city, especially where the river was. It was not far from the Jewish street.

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And they came in with tanks. And they looked like, oh my God, they were so militarized with everything. And when they start walking the street, they looked at the Jews like there's some kind of creatures, like-- you know, like they made caricatures of the Jews. They're not human beings. That's what their propaganda was in Germany, that the Jews looked like they had the-- they couldn't believe, the Germans, when they met a regular Jewish person.

And the next day, of course, they took over the-- what you call-- the government there in the city. And the next day, you saw placards. What do you call them?

Placards, uh-huh.

Yeah-- over on walls, on homes, on buildings all over-- all the Jews have to-- have to wear white bands with the blue Magen David. And-- I'm stretching the story too long. It's going to be--

No, no, no.

And of course, everybody did-- from a child on, two years old. And you start seeing the German SS coming around in every house. They're looking for waffen. Waffen means ammunition. They thought Jews are armed. They were very afraid of waffen. And whatever they saw, they kicked, they broke.

They hit the men. They hit-- they were terrible. And this was right at the beginning. Right away the-- it was very short on food. People were standing in line for bread from 2 o'clock in the morning till midday to get a bread from the bakery. It was just terrible.

Of course, I had my mother. Her name was Temma Goodman. I wrote it, my mother's name, Goodman. And I had a sister. She wasn't very well. She was only 21, my oldest sister. And she had kidney trouble. So my mother tried to do the best. A few years before my father died, very young, and my brother, who is here now in the United States, he and a lot of young men because it was that all the men, Jewish men, young and old, the Germans going to destroy. They're out to get the Jews, the men, the males.

So he was about 19. He packed. And all the guys he knew, his friends, they packed and they ran. They're saying to go into Russia. It's so far away. You have to cross the whole country, Poland, to get to Russian border because Russia wasn't attacked. Only Poland was attacked.

So he left the house. My mother cried with the rest, all of us little kids. But then I came after my brother. And then I had a brother, Sukha Behrish, and I had a brother, Chaim Shulim. And I had a little sister, Dinele, Dina. Of course, they're all gone. I didn't hear from nobody.

They said at the end of the war-- not at the end, maybe '43, they made a ghetto i Nowy Sacz, where I was born. And I never heard from them, that they destroyed them in Belzec. Belzec, I don't know where it is.

But they drove them in closed--

Vans?

--vans with gas in it or something. And that's how they killed. I can imagine my mother with my little sister. She was only eight, my little brother 10.

How old were you then?

I was a teenager too. That time, I had family in Czechoslovakia because my father, some of the-- my grandfather-- I don't know the-- and it's not far from us. So my cousin came from Czechoslovakia. And he said, why don't you come to us. And then we were going to try to get mother and everybody else to Czechoslovakia.

It was in March. No-- in the wintertime-- it was snow, I remember. And he sent a guy, he smuggled me through the

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border. It was when we walked in snow over the hill, somewhere, then down. And I came to Petrova. That's near Bardejov. But it was a little city. And Petrova is a village. And I stayed in Petrova about a week. And then I went to Bardejov because my uncle lived there.

This was-- my cousin lived in Petrova. He was shot by the SS, by the way. He wanted to protect his wife. They pulled his wife, so he went [INAUDIBLE]. And they shot him right, right there. Their family didn't survive, my cousin and his wife and [INAUDIBLE] of children.

And I went to my uncle. This happened-- this happened afterwards, when they shot my cousin.

Sure.

Because in Czechoslovakia, there was no order, German orders or nothing. Of course, they were there already--

A couple of years.

And then they started-- this started before, but they weren't as devious as they started with Poland. With Poland they were murderers. They were just going around and cutting beards and shooting people and stoning. They did anything they wanted. And Jews aren't the defending type, the religious Jews. They don't defend themselves. They take it.

No more-- we're not that type anymore. We're not going-- we're going to fight them. Anyway, it's not going to happen ever again. It can, but it won't.

So I was there in Bardejov. And I stayed there over-- it was Passover came, and I stayed there. I was in contact with my mother and the children. And then I went to Presov. And I worked in Presov.

I'm originally, of course, a corsetiere in corsetry. You know, girdles was at that time. And so I got a job there because I lived there, and I wanted to make some money I could send to my mom because my mother was by herself.

And it was, I think, in the end of 1941, when the Germans ordered for the Czechs to wear the Star of David.

The Jewish Czechs?

Jewish Czechs, in Czechoslovakia, because this was Czechoslovakia I was. And it didn't take long and around we wore Stars of David. Whatever the Germans said, that's what Jews were doing. And in March 1942, March 21, 1942, they ordered all the Jewish girls from 15 years old to 25, 1,000, to send them to arbeits camp.

And then where I worked, Gizzy Glochstein, she was a young girl too, we worked together. She and me, they ordered we should take whatever we want, our best clothes and everything. We're just going to work. Who could suspect that such atrocities? Nobody with a normal moral mind couldn't even.

So we packed up, and we went. It was down the hill, I remember, to the fire department. They had a gathering. We went there with the suitcases. And there were already half of the city of Presov there.

And they put us on trains. And there were-- there were quite a bit, 1,000 people to put on trains. And we drove, I think, a day and a half because it was overnight. In the afternoon-- it took all night. The next day we arrived to Auschwitz.

The first thing when we came here-- this was Auschwitz city. This was a camp where they had military, German military buildings. And they had already built the Birkenau. This was the outskirts of Auschwitz. And we were there.

And the first thing, we had to stay in line. We saw people in the blocks-- there were houses-- in the windows. And we looked at them, and we asked them, where are we? What are we doing here? How long are we going to be here?

And they were women mostly. And they started laughing and talking in German and say, you're here. You'll never get

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out of here. We couldn't understand, we couldn't believe it.

First of all, when you're young, you don't believe in--

In dying.

--in morte. Yeah. They were German. They brought them from German prisons. They were all criminals. Everybody has the--

Triangle.

Winkel, they call it. You were there? How do you know that?

I just know.

Anyway, the green were for stealing, red was political prisoner, purple was by Bible forscher, Bible searcher. Bible searcher, they were religious.

I see.

The non-Jews, but religious. They were nice people. Black, they were prostitutes. They had black Winkel. Of course, the Jews, later on, we got the-- they had Star of David, Jude on it.

And we were standing in line for hours it took. It took one at the time. The first 100-- there were SS running like crazy all over the place. They didn't bother us, but they were so busy in the front. I don't know, because my number-- see, the first 1,000 were German kapos. The Germans from the prison, they became our kapos, our supervisors. And then we started from 1,001. And I'm the 930th. My tattoo is 1,930.

And the first 100, they made the medical--

Experiments?

--experiments. Want to check how much virginity is in the Jewish nation. So the first 100-- then they shaved our heads, took all our belongings away. We had photos from family. I have nothing left from my family. And they put us in great big basins, bathtub, and they fit about 10 people.

The water is black as this. And they told us to go in and wash. They shaved our heads. And they said that Jews are [GERMAN]. We're dirty, and we're loused. And they clean us.

They gave us, from Russian-- I was the first transport to Auschwitz. I'm trying to say why this-- on Russian uniforms, they were war prisoners, which the Germans did away with. They gave us their uniforms. They were full of lice. That's the time when I learned what lice is.

They put us on those uniforms. They gave us the wooden shoes from Holland. You know? And you get the sores on your feet walking. First of all, when they shaved our heads, and we looked at each other, everybody looked like a monkey. Nobody-- a sister and a sister couldn't recognize each other.

And after the nightfall, we were there, in that building. And we came in in a room, empty, wooden floors, was only white walls, and was spread straw. And we-- they put about 100 in one room. And we were laying on that straw to sleep.

I don't remember if they even gave us a piece of bread, a slice of bread that night. And we didn't eat for two days. Whatever we took with us, I guess, that's what they-- and the next day they told us to go in line. And they took us, marching all the way to Birkenau.

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We come to Birkenau-- the wires, electric wires 25 high all over, the great big sign, "Arbeit Macht Frei." And we knew already. They told, the German kapos, you know, they told, you never come out. We said, arbeit macht frei?

We didn't suspect it, but it's ironic. It just-- they say we never come out. Arbeit-- we're all willing to work. Who's not going to work? And they start to dividing us and put us in barracks. Blocks we called them. They called them-- those beds were bunk beds, but you can't imagine what they-- they were plain wooden boards, above, in the middle, and on top. There were maybe 10 straws on each bunk.

And they put-- we were-- how many people fitted there? About six or eight, whatever. And we slept one there, one here, one there, here, like this. And no electricity in that barrack, no water. And it was a--

Those kapos start hitting us, whatever they had on hand-- sticks, belts. Constantly we heard-- they were screaming. Los! Los! Los! You know, that's all they know is los. Get going.

And the girls were scream, and all of a sudden, she got hit. It's in the dark. And they're-- so came next morning, we had Zahlappell. Zahlappell is counting. Everyone from every barrack that we stand like, I guess, military. I don't know. We stand in a line, and they count.

Roll call.

A roll call. We had roll calls 5 o'clock in the morning. And after work, it was 7:00 at night, in the evening. All the time roll calls-- they're counting us in case how many died, how many ran away. They wanted to know all the time. So they counted us.

And this was going on. Yeah. And they were sending us every day to us ausenarbeit. Ausenarbeit means outdoor work. Such unnecessary work we were doing-- wasserkommando, for instance. They sent us to, like, ponds, where the grass grows.

And they gave us, made of wood, you know, the--

Rakes?

No, you-- you hold on it, like on two sides. It's made--

A plow?

It's weaved like. You never saw something like it. They told us to go and to cut the grass in the water. We had to go up to here and water, and cut it, and fill them up, and bring them out of the water, and put them on the ground. And the next day, they told us to take the same thing and throw it back in the water, just to torture us.

Make work.

Yeah, make work. And the soldier, German SS, were standing all around with dogs, called German shepherds. And they were howling, and the bayonet staring at you. You were afraid to do-- you couldn't go to bathroom. If you had to go to the bathroom, you had to go a little-- a little away from there.

And God forbid, when the soldier decided he didn't like you, he said you went too far. And he shot you right there. He sent the dog on you. And we were carrying home, every single day, from work, from home to the lager, we carried dead girls.

And then they-- and they taught us how to sing. We had to sing yet when we walked from work. So we sing it, the German songs. And then later on, we had an orchestra. They were playing the orchestra at the Arbeit Macht Frei door. And this was going on for about a year.

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When did you go there? When did you go to Auschwitz?

1942. I was there--

You were very early, very early.

I was the first one, the first transport. I can show you the tattoo. It's a big tattoo. And I was tattooed here.

Oh, yeah, and this happened. When we got to Birkenau, a week later, there were already, in men's concentration camp, Auschwitz, who did that work. They sent them to our camp, to Birkenau, to tattoo the girls because, God forbid, we might run away. So they can find us. And everybody got the number with the Star of David, and then the number only.

By the way, I don't want to interrupt. My bus is leaving about 6:30. Let me make it short.

That's a half an hour.

Yeah.

Sorry. You suit yourself, Mrs. Newman.

I would love to tell you the-- I didn't tell you no atrocities, what happened.

Let me tell you. It is 6 o'clock. So you can speak as long as you want to.

Yeah, I want to go. No, my watch broke while I'm here.

Well, you'll see mine. OK?

OK. Maybe another 10 minutes. I just want to get to the point. After that, after maybe a year-- I think it was in that year, about-- it was in March, about 1943. We had the selection. They called it a [NON-ENGLISH]. There were 10 great big SS. The real Himmler himself was in Auschwitz. And they had that [NON-ENGLISH].

They were standing apart, about 10, 10 meters apart, 10 of them. I remember one with the glasses, he wasn't Himmler. He is one of the very well known. You saw him on Nuremberg--

Trials?

--trials. I recognized those guys. They're very well known to me. Not many left of my transport, that's for sure. We had that selection. It was in the wintertime. And after work, when you work outside, your hands were swollen, of course. It's very cold. We didn't have no clothes. And coming to the camp, there was no heat.

And if it was raining and everybody wanted to dry their clothes, they took off that uniform, put it one on top of the other. And next morning, 5 o'clock, you put the wet one on. So we had that [NON-ENGLISH].

And we had to walk with our hands stretched out and showing them that-- and you were passing all 10 of them. And whichever didn't like you, he showed you this way. And if you passed all 10, which I did, I don't know by what miracle-- and we went to the Revier. Revier was like a first aid what they provide, they called it. And it was fenced in.

And we were then 36,000 Jewish girls. There were 150 left. They loaded up all the rest of trucks. And those girls knew where they're going. This was the first crematorium they had in Auschwitz. And they all were took to the gas chambers. The crematorium was burning. The stench of human flesh was terrible.

And those guys-- you couldn't sleep with that smell. And we knew what's there. And I don't know how, but I survived it. And after that, in 1943, the transports were coming from all over, from Holland, Belgium, Greece, France, from all

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over-- Italy. From all over Europe they were coming. And they filled up the camp again because they dispose of these.

The winters were terrible cold there. The summers were so hot and no water. We were drinking-- when I used to go out to-- you know, in the ausenarbeit, we were blowing on the [? frog ?] over the ponds. They were green, and we're blowing it, pushing it away and drinking that water.

And some got sick. Somebody said there's poison in it. Who knows what you drink?

Then one day I decided I want to live. If I'm selected to live, I have to help myself. We had a road captain. We called it Kanada. It's a kommando. They had barracks, where all those new transport came. So we took their clothes and their belongings and everything.

[AUDIO OUT]

And there, all the belongings were filled. The barracks were filled with everything what people-- you know, when you go away and you knew you don't come back home, so you take the best you have. And that's what happened. I went there, and I asked the girl who was running this because there were some Jewish girls who were helping the SS to-- he gave her the order to pick out.

And she happened to know me, so I said, please take me, that Kommando. But I don't think I'm going to come back home alive-- not home, to the lager. When I have to go ausenarbeit, I won't make it because we were-- on the ausenarbeit, I worked--

In the fields.

Not just in the fields-- they had bombed homes, homes because it was in Poland. You know, Auschwitz is. They had bombed, and the only walls were standing from buildings. And they told us to [? remove ?] it. You take a telephone pole, and each-- and we had like-- what you call it, metal-- and you were holding to it. And about 10 girls on this side and 10 girls on this side, we're holding onto this. And we hit the wall.

So the--

Knock it down.

Knock it down. And that's how we hit it. And so we hit our own girls because the bricks were falling on the heads. And that's how we carried dead ones home every time. And that kind of work I was. That's why I knew I'm not going to survive, if I have to go again in the cold and the bitter. And in this, I have to go and try another kommando.

And the girl-- I don't remember her name. She said, be here in the morning right after Zahlappell, after the roll call. And I was there, and she put me the Kommando. So I worked inside, indoors. And that's all we had to do is open suitcases and separate shoes to shoes, dresses to dresses, coats to coats. You saw those things.

Sure.

And that's how I worked there for a while, till I got typhoid. Everybody got typhoid there. And my girlfriend, Gizzy Glochstein, she didn't want me to stay on the block, on the barrack because everybody who was sick, they were taken to the gas chambers at that time. So she dragged me sick on the roll call. She dragged me to work. And when we came to work, I laid down, and she found a lemon. She was given it.

And she was putting the clothes on top of me. And I was laying underneath there until 6 o'clock or whatever the time was to go to the camp. And I was under that. And that's how I survived this. She forced on me I should drink, I not dehydrate.

I am very grateful to her, and I wish I'd find her. I can't. I don't know where she is.

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And I worked there in the Kanada, in the [INAUDIBLE]. And then I, one day, I wanted-- I met-- there was a woman, Mrs. Smith. She was a politishe prisoner from Czechoslovakia. It means she was opposing the Germans. So-- I better go. Go and take-- can I do it somehow? I would like to tell you a whole my life story.

There's so much. But I finish with that. The Ms. Smith saw me, and she-- and I spoke Czech. And she was from Czechoslovakia. She wasn't Jewish, but she was a fine lady. And she said Edie, you come-- I was very cute, by the way, when I was young. So she said come in the morning after roll call and stay in my Kommando. And since then, I worked in the [GERMAN] Kommando. I was closing the Neuzugange, the new transports. Whoever was--

Brought in.

--brought in to live, not to the gas chambers, to the camp, I was giving them clothes. So this was in there, where I could have clothes. We were clean. They put us in a different barrack. And we had a sauna there-- not a sauna, showers. We could go and wash, where everything-- and the others, you know, was terrible.

This was all in Auschwitz, in Birkenau?

This was in Birkenau.

I see you went to RavensbrÃ¼ck.

RavensbrÃ¼ck and Malchow too. And this is not done yet. In '44, there were transports. And we had-- once they hung four girls because they wanted to destroy a crematorium. And they brought the ammunition to the camp to give it to the Sonderkommando, to the men's camp who worked by the crematorium, to get it to explode, which happened.

They did.

It happened in 1944, in September. But by that time, I was already in [NON-ENGLISH], not in Birkenau. They needed to open the [NON-ENGLISH]. [NON-ENGLISH] means, in Auschwitz, in the city-- this was 1944. They had three buildings. One building in the middle was SS. And we were the protectors. On the both sides, the buildings were haftlinge. It means us, the prisoners, the Jews. We lived there.

So when the bombing is going to start, must have started already, then the English planes were come and flying. And the Germans were running down the basement in their buildings. But they knew, and they hit the right on the head on their building.

Oh, it was bombed from the outside?

From the outside-- the English planes came. This was in '44. I got to go.

OK.

I wish I could tell you so much more. What can we do?

One other thing that you can do--

Yeah.

--is, if you really want to have an additional interview--

Yeah.

--we can arrange perhaps to have it done in Philadelphia.

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All right.

We'll see what we can do.

OK.

OK?

OK.

All right.

I thank you--

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