

The following is an interview with Frieda Salomon.

Why don't you tell me about what life was like for you before--

Well, I was living in a small town, [PLACE NAME], in Hungary. I had five-- we were two girls and three boys. And we were like middle-class-- you call it here a middle-class family.

What did you parents do?

We had a store in a small town of-- what do you call it? We had everything and life was pretty good. We didn't know from luxuries because at that time, even electricity we didn't have too long in the town where I come from.

But we didn't know anything bad, and even the Christians was pretty nice to us. There was no, really, antisemitism that time until Hitler started to in '39, 1939.

What happened when Hungary was occupied? What changes came about when the Germans came to Hungary?

It wasn't too long in Hungary. After they occupied Hungary, they came into our town four weeks before Passover, and after Passover-- one day after Passover, we were taken to a ghetto, to SÄtoraljaujely. And I don't even know what happened because we were two days there, and we were taken to Auschwitz.

We had an 82-year-old grandfather. He was taken to my mother's father and sisters, and his brother was in a forced labor camp. And my whole family came, aunts and uncles. It was-- I don't remember exactly the date, the last week of April, 1940.

How old were you?

I was 21 years old, and my sister was 13 years old that time.

We had a very, very rough time because, first, let me tell you, we came into Auschwitz three days. We were huddled in cattle cars, and Friday night, we came into Auschwitz. There was no windows, and they-- I cut a small hole through the wall, and my father looked out. And when he looked out, he said we came to hell. There is no survival here.

And he said-- he told us, the two girls-- he said, I feel my two girls will be surviving, but I wish my son-- one of my brothers was with us-- he would have escaped. Because there is-- he said, this is hell. The flame was going up, and you could smell-- on this tiny little hole, the smell from burning people came in.

Did you know what it was?

We didn't know nothing, no. That was just your--

I can't imagine.

Yeah, yeah. We waited all night long until they unloaded the train. People said we were lucky because those people who was unloaded at night they straight went to the camp crematoriums. We went through selections. Dr. Mengele was the-- who was-- who did the selection. He pointed with a stick. You go this way, and the other one goes that way.

My mother-- she was 42 years old. She was a young woman, and she helped two of my aunt's children so he was-- she was sent to the other side with the mother's two children. She was taken away from us right away, and I ran after her. I wanted to go with my mother, and a German came after me and pulled me out. He said, you still have to live.

And I didn't know what that meant at that time. Twice he pulled me back. And I had my father's sister. She was in-- from Czechoslovakia ran to Hungary, and she-- the Czechoslovakia was taken first, was occupied before us. She came

with a son, so she was with us and my sister.

And we came into to camp, and we were taken to a bed. And we were told, take off your clothes, and we had to stay there naked. This was the first dehumanization. It was a terrible feeling when you stay there naked. A man was going around, walking around there.

And they cut our hair, but from all over. It's just-- I can't tell you how it felt because my aunt and my sister stood next to me, and I couldn't recognize them. You them in hair, and the next minute, it doesn't even look the same person.

We got one dress, a gray dress, and, I think-- and underpants. That's how much clothes we had. Were in the A Lager. We came into to the barracks. We had to-- in front of the barracks, we had to stand zählappell.

And the blockälteste-- blockälteste, this-- they called it a block-- a block. And she was the head of these people, and she was a Czechoslovakia girl. She spoke Hungarian, and she told us, you should know, girls, when you took off your clothes in the bath, whoever was taken away from you, your mother, your sister, your brother, was killed.

We could not believe it. And she showed the flame from the crematorium, and she says, can you see these flames? There where they burn. And can you smell? And we smelled it. But we still didn't want to believe that would happen.

We were living there-- we were there six months. Oh, six weeks later, she led us-- tattooed, and when we were tattooed-- when we came back, she says, thank God, I saved your lives. We couldn't understand what she's talking about. Again, she said, now you're going to work. Because until then, we didn't work, and who didn't work in Auschwitz what did you do-- those were sent a constant selection and went to the crematorium.

We worked at the-- they called the Brzezinka. We did-- selected clothing. We had to look through the clothes, what the people brought in, gold, silver, money. We had to open all the linings and take out-- and my God, if you see-- with big trunks they used to take out gold, silver, and diamonds, and whatnot from this camp, what the Jews brought in.

At that time, they had food because people was bringing in food, so we were eating as long as we were in this place. What we got there in the camp-- it wasn't edible.

What was it like?

Well, how can I describe it? The pigs had better food than me. The only thing what they did-- they put something in the food. We should not be-- we should calm. The blockälteste told us, you'll find lumps in the food. She says, eat it. It's good for you. You're not going to feel the pain, whatever it is. We were doped-up.

We walked there, I think, three or four months. Then we were taken to-- they were building a hospital for German soldiers. In between what happened, they took blood from us because they needed blood. They went to various selections constantly. When Mengele was bloodthirsty, middle of the night, he would come in, and he would holler, los, los, get off your kojás. Because it was a koja. They called it a koja.

And he was selecting people, middle of the night, so it was very hard to keep it together with my sister. We would run through the window to another block-- another lager. We were in A Lager. And we would go into another block until the selection was over, and we would come back.

Nobody saw you?

Well, the people have helped to get out because they knew-- nobody wanted to be-- somebody should-- somebody should go to the other side because it was really bad. Then Irma Grese-- I don't know if you ever heard of her. She was a beautiful German woman, but she was the most sadistic person you ever saw.

She used to come in, and she used to ask people with beautiful hands and beautiful skin, and they would-- she would take them. We never knew what happened to those people, but then later on we read in the paper when we were freed--

we read in the paper she made lampshades of people's skin.

Then when we were working at the-- we were-- we were building roads for the hospital. We used to go out in the morning. Well, every morning, that's also-- it's typical German-- you had to march through the gate every morning and by music, and you had to hold up a piece of paper. Numbers-- numbers was written-- I can't-- numbers were written on the piece of paper, 10 people, and they called it [GERMAN].

And one morning, I held up this paper, and this woman, this German woman, came and gave me a slap on my face. Two teeth fell out at one time, and the third one was loose. I didn't feel pain. My friends were crying, and I said to them-- I was joking. I said, now I feel I'm a soldier.

The girl is here who was then with me, and she was telling me the other night, remember what you said, "I'm a soldier"? I didn't want them to cry because they'd hurt me, but pain-- it wasn't even pain that time. You didn't feel anything. You were-- you were like stone.

If you cut yourself, you didn't get an infection. Here, you cut yourself, you have an infection right away. In there, it didn't-- we were the six months in Auschwitz. After Auschwitz, we were taken to Belsen-Bergen.

Belsen-Bergen was a concentration camp. Well, I don't know. We weren't in a building. We were in a tent. They didn't know what to do with people.

Then there we were-- it wasn't working. It was terrible to be there because if you didn't work, you didn't get no food and to laying around. You couldn't walk around outside, not even have fresh air or anything. You felt kind of weak after a-- then when you got up from bed, you felt like dizzy.

And they just didn't feed you anything?

No, they gave us once a day some soup. The soup was water, like a little brownish water. People were dying like flies. It's unbelievable. People went crazy on hunger. If he wasn't really physically and mentally very strong, then you could not survive. It wasn't really-- it was impossible to survive.

Was your sister still there?

Yes. Oh, yes, before we left Auschwitz, my aunt was taken away. It was a night, and it was a selection. And she was taken away, and the feeling-- that already I knew my mother perished. I said, now we felt she was our mother already. She's the one to live for, and yet she was taken away. It was really-- I can't describe the feeling.

I felt like touching-- they had barbed wires, electric barbed wires. I just felt like touching it, I should end my life also. Then my sister said to me, we lost our mother. We lost our aunt. But you have to live for me. I realized I really have to see she should live.

So after a few days-- we were about two weeks in Belsen-Bergen. We were selected for work, but we had to wait till they're going to take us. So it took six weeks until we left Belsen-Bergen but before we left, it was a Saturday night, and as I said, people was dying. And I felt somebody is tapping me on my shoulder, like my father would have touched my shoulder, and said, you go out.

And I said to my sister, you know what? I have to go in the bathroom, give my shoes down. And as I wanted to go down, I fainted. I was out, fell down, and they heard everything. But it took a long time until I got to-- and somehow, that day, we had to leave from Belsen-Bergen.

The same day came in from Auschwitz the lagerfÃ¼hrer. His name was Kramer. I think he was killed right away. He was hung. I don't know. The Nuremberg trial-- he was hung right way. He was the head of the Auschwitz lager.

Then he came to Belsen-Bergen, and when he came, he saw-- here we have to go because this is real death. And then

the news came we have to go to work to-- we went to Braunschweig. But we had to stay Zahlappell, and I could not stay. I was fainting. Every five minutes I was fainting that day.

The girls-- they pulled up-- they had a high-- like you have these umbrella stands. They pulled up-- it was full of sand. They pulled it up, and I sat on it. And it looked like I was standing. And that's how I-- and when I fainted, I just put my hand-- they tried to hold me.

And as we left Belsen-Bergen, somehow the sickness left with me. Now I became-- OK, as we went by a kitchen and there was turnips-- and I go-- and I stole one, and I was eating it. I gave for everybody who was with me. We shared everything. And somehow this was my medicine.

We came to Braunschweig. We were cleaning the ruins of the houses was bombed. We used to go out in the morning, and we stayed in a-- they were training horses for-- what kind of horses they trained? But anyway, this was a stable, and it was full of lice. We became something-- we had so much lice.

And my sister-- she had a boil on her knee, and this-- had the lice. It was infected. It was-- I can't tell you how it was. And we used to go out every morning and come back at night, so once a day we got a little bit of soup. That's how you were working. And we had to take the-- and there was raids. The Germans would go down in the bunkers, and we would go into a church. There was a bombed-down church, and we would go in there. And it was so terrible cold, winter.

This was six weeks we were there. People also-- that was the most horrible thing that they did. People were dying, and they-- in the morning, we have to stay Zahlappell. They put the people, the dead people, with us, and they counted the dead people with us. Instead of burying it, they were with us.

I don't know how long-- we were there six weeks. It was such a big pile already. One day, a truck came, and they just threw them up and took them. Then we were taken to another place, to Bendorf. There we were working in a factory underground in a salt mine. We have to go every day and from the salt and no food, it became swollen.

I hardly could walk. It was like a balloon. You blew up like a balloon. But it was a night shift, and this-- the German woman, SS woman-- she was such a sadist, tall, big woman. She came, and she asked us who has to go to the bathroom, 12 o'clock at night. Well, everybody wanted to go. You go at 6 o'clock. Even though you don't eat, you have to go to the bathroom.

She says, now I'll take 10 girls, so she took 10 girls. I was one of the first ones that time. And as we walked into the bathroom, she took the-- she had a whip. She started to hit everybody who she-- back and forth. And we were afraid, so I fell. I hurt my back. I blacked out that day. Ever since then, I would never go with her to the bathroom because everybody was afraid of her.

You could only go if somebody took you?

Right, yeah. It wasn't allowed to go-- by every person was standing a German, and you were working with a big machine that made bullets. You couldn't see the other person because the machine was so big, so high. You could not see the other one. You could see next to you there was-- but the gentleman was standing by you and watched you, how you worked. You had to walk fast, and if you didn't work, you were in trouble.

This was also six weeks. But we saw something is happening because sometimes, in the morning, the Germans didn't come in. And sometimes they just disappeared all where we were. You know, when we went home, they disappeared. It looks like the Americans and-- I don't know-- the Allied forces started to come closer and closer, and they felt they were in trouble.

This woman-- she disappeared right away. She was the first one who disappeared because she probably was afraid of her life.

Well, I'm just trying to make it very short because sometimes it's very hard to talk about it, and sometimes it's-- you'd

like to talk about it not to forget, and yet when you talk about it, you just feel like crying. And we don't have no tears anymore.

Anyway, we were there six months-- six weeks. To see my sister suffer-- it was even harder.

I don't know if she saw me, how I looked, but I saw her, how she looks. And I know-- she's just 13 years old. She was 14 when we-- in camp, she was 14, and I felt like I'm responsible for her. She always-- when I didn't feel good or-- sometimes you got very depressed, and I had very-- I always-- since Auschwitz, I always said, yes, we're going to get out from here. We will be free.

And I always had high hopes, but there was some times when-- oh, I forgot to tell. My brother's fiance was with us, and in this salt mine one day she says she is not coming with us. She can't make it. We just-- she says, I am so swollen. I just can't move.

And I always forced her, yes, you have to come because you should know, if you stay here-- you come home, you're not going to find your home. She says, this time I'm not going. And she said, I don't care. I just can't go. And I-- she had a dream, and her mother-- she said she dreamed that her mother told her everything is OK there, didn't know what to do. Her aunt was with me also.

We tried to pull her out, but we could not. And when we came home, we didn't find her. She was taken away. So things like that made you-- sometimes, even though I had hopes and I wanted to survive, but it made you so somehow life is not-- it's not worth it to live for. That's how you felt. And--

[INAUDIBLE]

It's cold here, yeah.

The doors are open. [INAUDIBLE].

I just met-- well, I should tell her about the concentration camp. Anyway, we were there working also six weeks. Altogether, we were a whole year-- a little bit over a year in concentration camp.

When the Allied forces came close, and they put us on a train. And the train was going back and forth from this-- this place to Buchenwald. You was constantly on this train. There was 220 people on the train in one cattle car. You put up your-- you stretched out. You couldn't pull back your feet.

There was no bathroom. There was nothing. There was a can that they passed around. But we do-- when they didn't open the door, and they called-- we were lucky. That was all luck. This German who was with us-- he never let open the door. Every train, every door was open at night.

That night, we were standing, and they opened the doors. And people had to go down, and they counted the people. Every tenth was shot. And this German soldier who was with us always said, girls, be quiet. I will not let open the door. I will stay outside. And I said they were here already, nervous girls.

First of all, you didn't get no food, no drink, nothing. People went crazy. Some of them-- you had nothing to live for, but you were still afraid you. Fear of death is terrible, even though if you don't have nothing to eat, or clothing, or what. Really, it was nothing, really, to live for, and yet you feared. And these girls used to scream, and we used to put our hands on them, be quiet, because we're all going to be killed.

This was going on for 10 days, every day, and for the bathroom we used this can. And when it was full, what they did-- they just took the can and just spilled it over the people. What can you do with it? That's-- it was really inhumane, like animals.

After 14 days, the door was opened, and we had to get out. This was Buchenwald. People were-- there was mass graves.

There was people all over, dead people, skeletons. The eyes, and mouth, and hands are open. You can see the suffering on these people.

And we were allowed to go in to get some water. This was after 14 days. I was drinking water. I thought I never finish. I drank so much. After that, I thought, I'm just dying. My stomach was hurting so terrible.

I could not stay. I could not-- I had to crawl on my feet. I didn't stand. It was such a painful-- but I took some-- I had a bottle somehow. I don't know where I got it. And I took some to my sister and for this-- my brother's fiance's hand. And they had some water also.

And we had to stay zahlappell. They wanted to count us. And these people came out-- after 14 days, how can they stand still? They can't. It was impossible. That was all surviving or-- she was our surviving angel or what, I don't know. She wasn't satisfied how we were standing, and it took too long for her to count us.

And in the meanwhile, a motorcycle came with the Red Cross. This is Bernadotte-- I don't know if you heard of him-- from the Swedish Red Cross.

What was his name?

Bernadotte. He came, went into the office-- there was an office for the SS-- and came out.

And we were hurdled back into the train. We had to get on the train, and then we were told we're going to be freed. But we don't believe this. The Germans were hitting us-- still hitting us, and pushed us and los, los. We don't want to believe it because they're still just as mean.

But we went on the train again, and on this journey, on this train journey, was 3,000 people. 800 was alive when we-- all them was either killed or died on this 14-day--

This was after you left--

This was the-- yeah. No, the Bendorf we left. We went-- then they took us to a very small lager. We got food there. And they gave us a little piece of soap, and they told us, go take a shower, and you're going to be free.

We went into this shower. One side was a shower, and the other side was a room, from the floor up to the ceiling people, dead people. You could not recognize as men or women. It was just skeletons. You could see the eyes, mouth. You couldn't even see teeth because that's-- it's unbelievable how they looked, and their hands reach out for help. I don't know. They didn't have no time to bury them or what. Why were they in this one room?

That's haunting me all the time. This is constantly-- every night, even now, every night, when I go to bed, I see this in front of my eyes. It's an unforgettable sight. After this, we were taken to the regular trains, and we were taken to Denmark, in Copenhagen.

We were overnight. The Danish people was very nice to us. They brought water. They couldn't come close to us because we were sick, but they opened a store-- they took out everything from the store, and they opened the door and put in biscuits sandwiches, we should come and take.

And then we were taken from Denmark to Malmo on a boat.

Where?

On a boat, Malmo, Sweden, yeah. I have to tell you, this was-- you can't imagine-- now I'm thinking, how could I be such an animal? If I tell my children, they said-- they couldn't understand. I don't know. They're not laughing, but they're telling me, how could you really become civilized again if you are such a-- like an animal?

We came-- was put on a boat, and the boat was a luxury liner. And the table was set, a beautiful table, and they had cake on the table. And all of us-- we had lice, dirt, and we came from this-- the clothes were so dirty, smelly.

And the waiters were waiting with us with a silver teapot, they're going to serve us tea and coffee. And as we came on the boat, everybody was grabbing this cake and putting it in their dirty clothes, and the waiters were looking at with open mouth. They couldn't believe there is such animals. They couldn't believe their eyes.

And we came to Sweden. Every one of us was sick. We were really-- we had a beautiful welcome there. The king's family, all the princesses and princes-- they all waited on us. We were put on a-- in a hangar, where the airplanes are stored.

But the first bath what we got there I will never forget. They had a room. The whole wall was a mirror, and I looked. I didn't want to believe that this was a mirror. How I looked-- this woman looked like a 200-year-old woman. I was 21 years old, and I looked like 200 years old, wrinkles, black. My face was so black, and I was so skinny. I was 28 kilo. This is, I think, 58 pounds, like a skeleton.

I could not walk. I had typhus. And two weeks I could not come to-- maybe that's what saved me, because people who were eating right away-- they died because the stomach was shrunk, and I could not eat. I was fed by spoon, two spoons at a time every two hours. And maybe that's what saved me.

Did they give you new things to wear?

Yes, the Red Cross gave us two dresses, one to wear, another to have what to change. And then the Swedish families-- they were very nice to us. They didn't know the difference-- somehow they didn't know the difference between a Jew and a Christian. They didn't want to know.

We lived pretty good there. We didn't have no family, and we didn't want to settle there because there was no future. It was no-- well, I was always Orthodox, and I wanted to be an Orthodox-- and I felt-- I didn't like, somehow, to be there, and I had an uncle here in Connecticut. I wanted to come to America.

When I came here, I right away-- well, we weren't so lucky like today. They come today from Cuba last year, they came. They were let in. We had to wait five years for the quota. And it's also-- when they're talking about freedom, they didn't open the doors for us.

So you had to stay in Sweden?

We had to-- yes, five years, until-- and you had to have-- in those days, you had to have co-signers, if you're not able to work, you have to-- they're going to look after you. It wasn't like today. You can come because it's so easy.

We had to wait five years after the war to meet our uncle and to come here and make a new living. You started there in Sweden, and then you had to come back and-- come here and start it again. It's very hard to start life when you come--

How old were you when you came here?

Well, about 20-- pardon?

No.

Well, I-- five years. 26 years old I was when I came here. It was a very long wait, but thank God we're here. And I'm very happy. I can talk about it. Well, I'll tell you the nightmares what we go through, nobody knows. Our children-- even our children-- maybe they don't understand sometimes.

When the children were small, they used to come home. And my oldest daughter-- she was crying. I said, why are you crying? She says, everybody has a grandmother, and we don't have one. I said-- and I tried to explain it to her why and

how. It was very hard to explain.

It is very hard to bring up children also by yourself. Thank God I have a grandchild already, and something is-- she has whom to call, and Ma, can I bring him and you will babysit. We never had this privilege, and our parents never had the privilege to see their grandchildren. They were beautiful people and righteous people, and yet they had to perish so.

And sometimes I-- I'm thinking if I'm normal. I went through such a hell. You can't-- I'm talking an hour? I see.

I lived it a whole year. Every day, you died, a thousand death. It was so hard. And yet when you talk about it, you talk about it in an hour. You're finished. So you don't feel it. What should I tell?

It's like a bad dream, and yet it's not a bad-- it happened. It really happened. And here is-- I have here two girls, two sisters. They were with me from Auschwitz until we came to America. They came two months before me to America from Sweden, [NON-ENGLISH]. I didn't know they were here.

And we went to the cultures-- no, the first night, accidentally, she is looking for her seat-- for her seat, and I'm sitting. And she looks up, oh, Frieda, you are here. You remember when you told me in Auschwitz we're going to get out from here? I says, yes, I remember, but you told me we're never going to get out, we're never going to get out.

Because she always told me, look at this barbed wire, and look at the electricity, and look at these Germans with the German shepherds. How can you get out from here? And I told her, you'll see. One day, I'm going to show you, and I'm going to tell you, we're getting out of here.

And we just met-- about-- we knew each other. We visited each other, and we come to each other's simcha. But it's-- when you meet-- and especially, I wouldn't give it away for nothing to come here and to see so many people in such a gatherness here after such a-- after the Holocaust.

I was in Israel also at the gathering, but it's nothing like it, what it's here, so many people. And I already met so many friends here with whom I was in camp and from the hometown. It's just good to see.

I hope I'm-- what did I want to say? Oh, I want-- I have to tell you this. It bothers me. When we came here-- what is-- I'm 60, so when they said, the Germans said they're going to give restitution for the Jews who was in concentration camp, we had to go to all kinds of doctors examination.

And, well, I don't get no restitution because this doctor said that-- I told him about my nightmares, and about my headaches, and about-- he says, it's menopause. My God. What kind of a doctor is he? Would you believe it? These German doctors.

And then they send me back-- they send my papers to a sanatorium, and they decided there in the sanatorium in Germany, I'm healthy. So that's--

So you normally get-- I didn't know that, that--

A lot of people doesn't get. No, a lot of people doesn't get it. No, It's not-- people should know about it because it's-- they get away with everything, even after--

Even after all that [CROSS TALK], there's still--

Yeah. And there was German doctors, and we had to go to.

Because I want to get a picture of what it was like--

I came, and he slapped my hand, this doctor, and it hurt me. And I was crying, and he was hollering at me. He says, you are a liar. I didn't even touch you! That time, I was afraid. Now I have to tell. They should know even here in America

that's what they got away with.

Where did he examined?

In his office he didn't have no nurse or anything. Nobody was there. And I talked to myself.

And he was appointed for this?

Yeah.

You didn't get to choose?

No. That's real German. But what can you do? Thank God we have-- it's not healthy, really. None of us is healthy. I have trouble with my hands. My hand was frostbitten, and I have trouble with the circulation. Winter is very hard on me.

As long as we live and we can talk about it, it's OK. As long as we talk about it. When we used to stay Zahlappell in Auschwitz, we used to get up at 3 o'clock in the morning, and 3 o'clock in the morning, it was very, very cold. And you had this one dress on, nothing else, no underclothing and no jacket.

And once it was pouring terrible, and the Germans were inside. And they were laughing by the window. The cows are standing outside, and we had to stay outside. We used to hug each other to be close, to warm each other.

But it was pouring so terrible. Even through our skin the water went through, and I used to say to this girl friend of mine whom I met here-- I said, you know who's laughing-- who laughs the last? And you see we're going to laugh the last.

And thank God that we are laughing. Even when we're laughing, it's a cry. It's really-- we cry.

And faith-- we had big faith. That's I think that's why we survived, faith. And a lot of people who was brought in camp from Budapest-- these people were city people, and I think city people are always weaker than smaller places. They were dying like flies.

I never saw anything like it. They were so-- they couldn't take it. They could not take the-- first of all, the food was-- they wouldn't eat. We told them, eat because you have to eat. You have to keep up your strength. They would not eat. And if you don't eat, you don't have with what to fight. And it was really a miracle if we are alive, just by miracle.

Is it off?

You have a few more minutes if you'd like.

Yeah, but what else would you like to know?

What was it like for you when you came to America? Did people have any idea--

Well, I tell you--

--what had happened? Did they want to know?

I don't think they wanted to know, and I don't know. I was very disappointed when I came to America because once I went shopping-- my family knew what happened. In the beginning, we didn't want to talk about it because it hurt. When you were talking about it during the day, at night you had a nightmare. The next day, you were sick. So you tried to forget.

But then somebody-- a lady asked me-- she wanted to show me a washing machine, and I said, I saw washing machines

there. She says, what did you come to America for? She didn't understand I don't have no family, and I was dying to have a family. I wanted to have-- to hold on to somebody whom I know.

I knew my uncle. He came out just with the last boat to America. And I wanted to have a family. I wanted to have somebody just to talk to. And once I went to a store, and a girl saw my tattoo. And she asked me, tell me, every gypsy has the telephone number on their arm.

They thought it's a telephone number, and I asked her, didn't you read the paper about the concentration camps? She says, no, she didn't. She was a Jewish girl. I says, then go and look up 1945, in 1945, the papers, and read it. And then you will know what is this number.

And things like that-- those days, I used to cover up. I used to put on-- I used to put on long-sleeve blouses, nobody should see it, because I didn't want no questions.

But now it doesn't bother me. Some people took off their tattoo, and I didn't want to. I had it. It's a mark, and I'm not ashamed of it. I'm not proud. It's nothing to be proud of.

I'm proud because I still live, but I'm not ashamed of it either. And I didn't want to take it out. I didn't-- it doesn't bother me, and I don't care if-- now if somebody sees it or stares at-- but it doesn't hurt like in the beginning it used to.

I always thought when somebody was looking at-- I felt so fidgety, so nervous, and I wished I don't have it. But now it doesn't--

I think when you smile you still can see the sufferings in our eyes or-- whenever we get together, there is no simcha. We shouldn't talk about the Holocaust. There is--