

My name is Halina Drexler Zimm. I was born in Poland. And when the war broke out I was 11-years-old. I remember the times-- they were very crucial times for us-- when the Germans first came into Poland, to Lodz. We had to leave everything behind us, because there was no food.

When the Germans first marched in, where I can remember, they made everybody put patches, yellow patches, stars, on them. And there was no school. This I remember very well. There was no school. There was no food. And we had to leave Lodz, because it's a big city.

And we went to a small town where my grandparents lived. And living in a small town was easier, because you had a chance to be near the farmers and near food. So we settled down, and we stayed there for about three years.

How did they take you to this other town?

Well, my father had to arrange it. I remember that we ordered or somehow he had made some kind of arrangement with a farmer. And he provide a wagon with horses, and we loaded up all our belongings.

And I remember, as we were driving, the Germans stopped us on the road and noticed that we had a lot of things on that wagon-- things that were valuable, things that they liked. And they picked up whatever they wanted and left us with almost nothing. I remember it was a very sad experience.

And we came to the small town where my grandparents live. And the name of the town was Zarnow. We settled down there. And my mother's whole family was there. So we were all together and lived there for three years.

And I went to school until I was about 14-years-old. And at that time, the Germans in that small town didn't really bother too many Jews. It was very peaceful. And I remember, like now, that they evacuated a lot of people from big cities. And some were evacuated, some of them were escaping. Because they knew that this is just like a little haven, because the Germans still did not bother the Jews there.

But in 1942, I remember 1942, there were rumors that the Germans are rounding out Jews from all the areas around and also from the small town that we were into. But people that live in the town did not believe it.

Oh, something just came to my mind. I'm sorry, I have to go back. I didn't mention that I have sisters, which was a very, very important thing that I omitted when I was started it. But I came from a family of three sisters, my father and my mother. And we had a lot of uncles and aunts and cousins.

We were very fortunate, because the two sisters survived. We were three sisters before the war, and thank God all of us survived as non-Jewish, which was thanks to our father and which I'll tell you about it later on.

Well, let me go back to where I started. And so when the rumors were going around that the Germans are rounding out the Jews and they are taking to concentration camp, everybody in that town did not believe it. The Jews did not believe it, because no one believed that some atrocities can be done to the Jews, that they are killing them.

But we had a father. And you know, my father was an exceptional bright man, very intelligent. And he did not believe the German. And he says, I know that we're all going for soap. He had a tremendous insight.

We loved him. We respect him immensely, because just whatever he said, we just listened to him like he was God, because he was so wonderful to us and just exceptionally brilliant. And he says, I am not going to let my children go in slaughter, I'm going to do everything that is possible to save them.

And somehow, he has arranged a meeting with a woman that was coming to us every single week. She was a farmer's wife. And this woman came to us because my father was making soap. Before the war we manufactured soap. We had soap factory.

So my father knew exactly how to make soap, and that's the way we were able to survive. Because when we live in a small town, he made soap, and the farmers would come on the weekend to our house. And he would give them the soap, and in return, they would give us eggs and butter and whatever-- all the food. So that's why we were not going hungry.

Well, this woman became like a friend to us, this non-Jewish woman. And she was extremely fond of my older sister and myself. My younger sister had a lot of problems. She was very shy, and she was very nervous. And she was afraid to take her with her when we would decide to go with her.

But anyway, she says, I feel so strong about these girls. She says, and I know that the Germans are killing the Jews. She says, I'm going to try to help you. She says, I'll get some papers from my preacher-- from my two daughters. She says, and I'll give it to you, but you can't live in here, you can't stay here.

Well, we didn't want to stay there, anyway. You have to go to another city that nobody knows you, because two people cannot be under the same name in the same-- can't have the same papers.

So what she did is she went to a priest and got her birth certificates from her two daughters and gave it to me and my sister, my older sister. And she refused to take my middle sister. She was afraid. Somehow, she didn't trust her. She was afraid that she was going to give herself away.

So I remember, like now, when she came on Saturday to us and brought the papers for my sister and myself, and she says, here are the papers. And my father says, well, where are they going to go?

She says, I don't know what I'm going to do with my daughters. Says, where are they going to go, they are so young? She says, well, I thought of it before. She says, I'm going to take them to Warsaw where my mother lives and let them stay with my mother for a while, and from then on, they'll have to be on their own.

She was a very good woman, this woman. My father rewarded her. He gave her some money, because he felt that she was a wonderful woman. She was not a very wealthy woman, so he gave her some money or jewelry. I'm not sure, exactly. But I remember before we left, my father took me separately and my older sister separately and walked with us.

We went into something like a wooden area, but we were away from everything. And he walked with us. And I remember it was me, particular. And he spoke to me for over an hour and told me-- gave me a different direction in life, how I have to conduct myself.

But a thing, one thing that stays very vividly in my mind is when he said to me, he says, never, never trust a Pole. He says, no matter what happens to you, he says, never give yourself out that you're Jewish, because you can't trust them. He knew the way they were. So--

Did you trust her?

The Pole, the Poles. No, no, because she was a very exceptional woman. But as a rule, Polish people-- no, you can't. And he gave me different directions and what to do. And he said, I don't know what I'll be able to survive. But he told me, he said, but when you survive-- and I believe you will-- he says, I have two sisters, one is in Detroit and one is in Toronto, Canada. He says, try to get in touch with them.

So I said goodbye to my father and to my mother, which was a very, very moving experience. I remember as a young girl, 14 or 15, we had a very good, wonderful social life. We had wonderful friends that came from all over Europe. Like I mentioned to you before that many of them escaped, because they had this town that's still untouched by the Germans.

So there was a lot of intelligent young people. And we had excellent, like I say, friends. And I remember in particular was one young man. I always liked him very much, and he was an artist. And he had sketch a picture of me. And my mother, she says to me, I want to take this with me. My mother said, no, don't take this. I want to keep this, she says.

I remember that. And it was just-- I can visualize, now in front of my eyes, how she said goodbye to me. He was just-- they were, both of them, just torn, the parents, when we say goodbye to them. But I feel that he was such a-- they were so unselfish, because they never thought of themselves. They only thought of us, just for us to survive.

He knew that he is not going to be able to survive, because he was a very handsome and very attractive man. He was 6 feet tall, and he was a beautiful statue of a man. Unfortunately, we didn't take after him. We were short, like my mother.

And he said he knew that he would be drawing too much attention to him. And being a man, it's very easy to be identified. You know, the Germans stop you. And they, many, many times, they would check you, whether you were circumcised.

Well anyway, we said goodbye to our father. And my sister and myself went with this woman on a train I remember to that Warsaw. On the train we were petrified all the time. It was at night, I remember. We were petrified, because the German soldiers were coming in and out. Even though that I had that birth certificate, but still knowing that you are Jewish, and we were always suspecting that somebody is going to stop you.

We came to Warsaw, finally. And she took us to her mother's house. We stayed with her for a couple of months with the grandmother. We never told the grandmother that we were Jews. And she did not tell her mother that we're Jewish.

We had a little money that my father gave us. And after about a couple of months, my other sister came, my middle sister, sent. Yes, my father arranged it somehow that she left. See, this was his wish-- that we survived. That's all he cared. After that, when he knew that we are going to be saved, somehow, he just didn't care what happens to them.

I don't want to go into details what did happen to my father my mother. I was, basically, going to speak about myself, now. Well, we stay there, like I said, the three of us, for a couple of months. And when my sister, my little sister came, somehow, the people that lived in this Warsaw apartment building-- the young people-- beginning to be very suspicious of us, the young people.

I mean, no one could tell a Jew like the Pole could tell a Jew. And like I said, my sister very easily could give herself out. So I remember, like now, some of these young guys came up to us-- said, look, you're not Gentile-- I mean, you're not Catholic, you're like Jews. What are you doing here, he says-- now, you better get the hell out of here. Otherwise, he says, we're going to send the Gestapo.

Now, you can't imagine. These young kids were our age, 15, 16-years-old. Now, what does he have against us? Nothing, just the fact that we were Jewish. They suspect us. They said, if you're not going to get the hell out of here, we're going to report you to the Germans, too-- you better get out of here, and tonight.

So my older sister said to us, we can't stay together-- we all have to separate right now. She says, because otherwise, we won't be able to survive. So the only thing what we did is, the three of us-- she says, let's go to the train station. That's the best place to go, and from then, from the station, we all have to split and go different directions.

So what happened to me-- we say goodbye to each other. And the only thing what I can tell you is that when I was there by myself, I kept on looking at different people's faces. I couldn't-- at the train station, all alone, and I said to myself-- I says, who can I ask, who can I talk to? Suddenly, I said to myself, I can't go to somebody that looks too good or looks too intelligent.

You know, you learn to read people's faces, because people intelligent, they'll be too suspicious. I've got to look for somebody that looks very plain, like a farmer, maybe. And I see a very old woman walking, very lonely looking, very poorly dressed. And I approached her. And I said to her, I'm from Warsaw, I live here in Warsaw. I said to her, I have received papers from Germany, they want to send me to Germany to work.

See what happened is the German people, what they did is they were rounding up Poles, Polish young people and sending them to Germany to work in factories, in fields. They were not-- in other words, they did not mistreat them-- only that they wanted them to work. They were not putting in concentration camp.

But a lot of the Polish people didn't want to leave their families. They didn't want to go to Germany. So I had to find some excuse. She said, what are you doing here alone? So I said to her, well, you see, I have received the papers, and I don't want to go to Germany. And I said, and I'm running away from them. I said, and I'm looking for a place to stay.

So she says to me, well, you're so young and so innocent-looking. Says, you poor thing, you come with me. I don't have too much, she says. What I do, she say, I'm a wash-woman, I wash clothes for different people. You can stay with me, she says, until you find a job. And she was very nice to me. And she took me to her. And I stay with a very poor person. She had only one room. She had a son about 13-years-old.

And I stayed with her. And one morning, she came. And she says to me, I work for this young couple that just got married, she says. Very, very intelligent people, she says, and they're looking for a house girl. She says, let me talk to them. She says, they might hire you.

So I was thrilled. And I said, oh, please, please, ask them, maybe they need somebody. I said, I don't want any money, I don't want anything, I just want to have a roof over my head and stay there. So she came the same evening. She says, they said they are willing to take you. And she says, you're going the next day, and they're going to interview you.

I went the next day. I tell you, I didn't sleep all night. I was so petrified. I didn't know who they are, what they're going to ask me. Maybe they're going to ask you for too many papers. I want to tell you, it was the biggest surprise of my life. I was already at the time, 15. She was 21, just married. She didn't ask me anything, didn't ask me where I come from, about my papers, nothing.

She hired me on the spot. And I was just thrilled. And she was young. I could relate to her. She was wonderful. I want you to know that that family was like the aristocracy of Warsaw, highly intelligent. I mean, that's the way the Poles were. Either they were very intelligent, or they were illiterate.

Anyway, I stayed with them for three years. And her husband was lovely. He was about 25. He was an engineer. And I became very close to her. Just I listened to my father's advice, and I told her everything, but never that I was Jewish. I told her about my personal things, because I was only 15.

I told her about the feelings-- how I felt about boys, because there were guys around, young guys-- and how I feel about them. And I wanted to gain trust in her, and she did. She became so friendly and so close to me that she even let me wear her clothes. Even though that she was gorgeous and tall-- I was short-- but she let me use her clothes.

And whenever she had big parties-- and I mean, she had some gorgeous parties-- and she introduced me to all her friends. And they were just wonderful to me. But every morning when I would go to the-- in other words, my duty was that I had to take care of the house. She had a dog and a house.

And she was a princess. I mean, in the morning, she'd wake up. I would have to fix the breakfast and give it to her, and hand it to her while she was still in bed. And every morning-- you know, we don't have Frigidaires. So every morning, I would go to market, shopping.

So this incident I want to tell you. So as I was walking in the morning to the market, someone was following me. And you know, I couldn't help it, but turning around. And when I turned around, I almost flipped

I noticed a woman that knew me. And I remember seeing her in the small town where my grandparents lived, where I lived for three years. She followed me all along. But I didn't-- I just didn't give another thought. I pretended like I didn't see her. And I continue walking. And I went shopping, and I went home.

A couple of days later, there was a knock at the door. I come from shopping. The lady that I was working for, she was still asleep. I opened the door very quietly. I remember, like now, we had a very gorgeous apartment. The apartment, by the way, was after the Jews. See, the Germans had two ghettos in Warsaw. There was a big ghetto, and it was a small ghetto. We lived near the small ghetto.

Anyway, so I opened the door, and I walk into the hallway. And it was very dark. And suddenly I see two men, one in the German uniform and one in a trench coat, like it looked like a Secret Service man. And the guy in the trench coat had a gun in his hand.

He says-- he grabs me by my coat, like that. And he says, come over here, takes me to the room. She's already sitting. She's sitting in the room. And the German sat next to her. And he says to me, what is your name, real quick?

I says, my name is Wanda Kazusek. This was my name, false name. And he said, where were you born? You see, on this certificate, it was written that I was born not in Warsaw-- I was born in the small town that the lady came from. And I said, I came from Zarnow.

And he says to me, Zarnow? I said, well-- who are your parents, when were they born? He was trying to catch me on something I wouldn't know. But I remember everything. See, this I tried to remember.

He says to me, how come you're not with your parents? I said, well, I'm not with my parents, because-- I had to tell him-- I says, because I received papers to go to Germany, and I just didn't want to go to Germany.

He says to me, tell me, do you ever go to communion? I said, yes. He said, do you go church a lot, do you go to-- He says, yes. Well, how often do you go? I says, once a week. I says-- well, where do you go to communion, when did you go to communion? I says, well, I went to communion when I was 7. I remember that.

And he says to me, 7-- now, what did you do there, what did the preacher do to you when you went to communion the first time? I said, he gave me a flake on my tongue. I said-- oh no, no, no. What am I saying? No, no, I just don't know what I'm saying, now. No, he says to me, what does he give you? And my mind was completely blank.

And I says to him, what do you mean? He said, well, tell me, tell me. He says, does he give you wine? Like that, see, at that time, I was completely-- my mind went completely blank. See, the mistake that I made-- that I have never studied. I knew the prayer. See, the prayers I knew.

But the history of the communion and things like that I didn't know. He says, does he give you wine? I didn't know. And I said, yes. When he heard me say he gives me wine, then he says, all right. He says, put your coat on, and you go with me to the German Kommandantur.

He says, you're not a Pole, you're a Jew. He says, like that, because he said, you know, who makes a mistake, like who doesn't know? And then he says, well, don't you know that when you go to a first communion that the preacher gives you a flake. He says, you said he gives you a wine.

See, all this time when I had spoke to him, she was talking to the German guy. And he obviously must have been extremely impressed with her. She was a stunning woman, stunning. And I remember we had a gorgeous baby grand piano. And he had a discussion with her. And you know, she obviously talked about music, whatever.

And suddenly he said, when he said to her, get dressed, you're a Jew, she got up, she heard it. And she comes up to me. And she says to him, says, she's not a Jew, I know this girl, she's been here with me almost three years. She says, she gets letters from her father and her mother.

See, what I did is-- I didn't mention to you, previously, because I know this conversation, I don't want to make it too long. But I got in touch with my sister. I found my sister. So what she did is we used to meet once a week. She used to come. Secretly we used to meet.

I didn't want my-- the lady that I worked for, I didn't want her to know that I still have my sister. I was afraid. You know, everything was too much. I was afraid. But I just told her that I received letters. My sister used to write letters to me, writing, my dear daughter. And for her not to be suspicious, I had to show them that I'm in contact with my family.

So she says, I know that this girl was receiving letters for her parents. She says, she even has a cousin, he says, that works for the Germans. You know, I was making up all kind of stories. So the Germans look at me, look at her. And she was-- she had gorgeous jewelry. She has fantastic jewelry.

And he says, well, no. He says, this girl is not a Pole, she is a Jew. He says, no one could make a mistake like that. He was very persistent. He said that I'm a Jew, and I have to go with him. He says, put your coat immediately on.

She says, well, let me tell you something. She says, let me take all my jewelry off. She took all her jewelry off. And she says, I'm giving you my jewelry as a-- what do you call this-- as a-- I don't know what's the word in English. In other words, leaving the jewelry is--

Like a bond?

Like a bond, saying that I am not a Jew. He says, I want you-- she says-- and she spoke to the German, too. I don't know how, maybe in German or something. She says, I want to tell you, she says, you get in touch with her parents, and if you find out that this girl is Jewish, she says to him, then you come back. She says, but I'm giving you all my jewelry-- she's not a Jew.

She was so convinced. You know, I lived with her for three years. And she was just so positive that I was not a Jew. Well, I want to tell you something-- that they left. And they told me-- before he left, he said to me, we're going to get in touch with parents. But when we're going to find out that you're a Jew, he says, you're going to be shot on the spot. He told me that.

I want to tell you that I could not sleep all nights. When her mother and her father came in, and she told them the story, the mother says, how stupid are you, how could you guarantee for Wanda? He says, if I would have been here and heard Wanda saying what she said, I would have say, take her away, she's a Jew. She said that in front of me.

She says, why did you say that? So she says to her mother, says, mother, she was so confused, poor thing, she was so nervous, she didn't know what she was saying. You know what she said to me I forgot to mention? She says, Wanda, tell him, tell him, tell him you pray it, tell him how you're going to the church every single week.

She was so just-- she was just wonderful. And I did say the prayer at the end of it. She says, tell them you pray. So I tell the prayer. This I remember. And I started to cry. When he told me, get dressed, start. When he says, come on, the German Kommandantur. I started to-- I burst out in a tremendous cries.

I don't know what I'm talking-- I was only 15 years-- I don't know what I'm talking. I was 15. I looked like I was 12. And I said, I didn't know what I was talking about, I'm so nervous and all that. Well, anyway, I want to tell you that for two months, I didn't sleep at night. I was so scared.

When I told my sister the story, she says, you must leave that spot immediately, because they're going to write to this address, and they're going to find out that there's no such-- there is nobody like you or there are two people like you-- her daughter, this woman's daughter.

So she says, you must leave this spot. And I said, where can I go? There is no place for me to go. I said, this is a chance I'm going to have to take. And I said, I'm going to stay here. And I did stay. And every night when there was a knock at the door afterwards, I thought it was they're coming after me.

I became so nervous that I develop a allergy, a itch. And on my stomach there was blood running from me, because I was reaching like that all night long all the time. I was just-- I can't begin to-- incredible feeling horrible.

I also want to mention to you that every single day when I would go to the market, I would pass the ghetto, see, because we lived very close to the ghetto. And I saw the bricks from the ghetto was very high, so you could only see the faces of the people that live on the, like on the third or fourth floor. And they would look at us with such envy that I'm free. You see what I mean?

I also saw on the wall of the ghetto, there were, every single morning, there were holes made up in the bricks in the wall of the ghetto where the Jews would stretch their hands out. See what I mean. And some Poles, smugglers, would come in and give them food in exchange for diamonds and gold. And I could see this every day.

I couldn't stop, because I was afraid. See because, as you see when you know that you are not kosher yourself, you see what I mean, you are afraid. I was so scared of my own shadow. I looked at it, and I walked away. And my heart was bleeding for these people. It was so sad.

We stayed there for-- like I said, I stayed with this woman for three years until the Germans finally came. There was uprising. And all night long, you could hear shooting and screaming and crying and all that. They were fighting all night long.

And then finally, the Germans came and crushed the uprising, the Jewish uprising, the Warsaw ghetto uprising. And what they did is-- they knew that some Jews were hiding in the basements. So what the Germans did is they put dynamites in the basements and then blow it up with all the people underneath.

So all night long. you could-- crying and how do you call it, what is it-- like weeping and crying, moans, awful. I couldn't sleep all night. No one outside the ghetto could sleep, not because they feel sorry for the Jews. I want to tell you, because I feel it is so important, not because they felt sorry for the Jews. It's because they were afraid that their property, their houses would catch on fire.

Because I lived so close to the ghetto I was a witness to these things that was going on there. So all night I couldn't sleep. And I cried bitterly. So her husband came up to me. He was a very stunning man, very intelligent. It was just they look like gods, those two people.

He came up to me. He says, Wanda, why are you crying, he says to me. I said, because I feel so sorry for these people, they are burning. I'll never forget that. And she was so wonderful to me. She says-- both of them, but this was her statement-- she says, Wanda, I feel sorry for them as human being, but as Jews, let them burn.

Can you believe that all these years as my memory is beginning to fade away, I can't forget this. I can't forget that she made that, such a strong statement. Can you believe? Oh, in my mind, I thought maybe she had it deep inside-- maybe knew she was a Jew. But after that statement, I knew that if she would have known that I was a Jew, she would have never in her life kept me, never.

But she was so convinced that I was not a Jew, see. And it was just it was I was crushed by that. Because I just felt that I was so disappointed. Being only 15, I was so disappointed in her statement.

Anyway, I stayed with her until the Polish people made the uprising. See, the Poles also made the uprising. And they, the Poles, fought for two months. And after the two months, the Germans also came and crushed their uprising. I mean, they couldn't fight against the Germans. I mean, Germans were powerful.

But the Poles thought that the Russians would come and help them to liberate, liberate them. But the Russians never came. They didn't want the Poles to know that they liberated them. They wanted to-- you did it, you fight your own battle till the end.

What I want to tell you is, what they did is-- the Pole-- a lot of Jews, they were in hiding or maybe posing as a non-Jew like me-- they came out. They thought that the war maybe is over or maybe they're free. See, they didn't know what was happening. So they right away identify themselves, say, I'm a Jew.

Because we were free for two months. The only way they'd be walking is under the ground, see. And there was no water. There was no food. I remember I volunteered as a nurse. I was a little nurse. 15-years-old, I was a little nurse, working, helping them. Never told them I was a Jew, never.

I tell you, I remember what my father told me, now, vividly. I said, I will never reveal it. After the war I never even-- I was afraid even to talk. But the Jews that came out, says, I'm a Jew and identify myself, I want to tell you, as soon as the Germans came, they evacuated all the Poles, put them in the concentration camp.

But you know what they did? They were, also, in trouble, just like the Jews. They pointed out, this is a Jew and this is a Jew. Can you believe this? It is the most incredible thing that anybody can imagine. They were in the same boat that the Jews are, but still they point at the Jew to the German. It was just. It was just horrible, I want to tell you.

Anyway, they took us. They all took us. They all took the Poles. They were participating in the uprising. They all took us in wagons, in the car, in these train cars-- destination, concentration camp. They did not want to kill them, just put them in concentration camp. They still did not see them like the Jews.

Well, anyway, when I was-- they line us up in a long row, pointing going into the trains. I knew that once I'm in the train, this is it. I am never going to get out of it. So they were pushing us forward. I was pushing myself to the back, trying to be at the end. So young, looking at faces, I saw a German standing, a nice looking young man with a good face. And he had a machine gun in the back.

I look at his face. I didn't speak too well, Germans, a little bit German. And I came up to him, and I says, [NON-ENGLISH]. I said, please sir, let me go. I said, I have in this town a father and a mother. See the only thing what he had to do is-- in other words, what they did, they took us in trains, not to concentration camp but just a little bit outside Warsaw.

And from Warsaw, they took us to another train to Germany, the concentration camp. So when they took us out from the trains-- being still in Poland-- I knew when we go to Germany, I may be able to escape. So I said, look in this town, I have my father and mother lives here.

And I knew that if I just run away the tracks, I'll be free. The only thing I had to do is just run the tracks. And I said, please, my father lives here, my mother, please let me go. He looked at me. He says, you're young. He says, you can go to Germany. He says, we need people like you.

But he still didn't treat us like the Germans-- like the Jews. So he kept on saying that to me, and I kept on bugging him. And because I knew-- I could sense in his voice that he was not a bad person.

It was really dark outside very, very dark. And I was with a older lady with me. See, I lost already my lady, the lady that I was with. I forgot. I missed her, too. Well, I was with somebody else, and she was standing next to me.

And she says to me-- suddenly, we see this German, turning his back toward us and waving his hand, like that-- giving a signal to run away. I didn't even notice. She says, look, this guy gives you a signal to run, he's turning his back on you.

I said, God, I'm scared to death, I can't go by myself. And I had a gorgeous fur coat that this lady that I worked for gave me. Because see, before we had to leave Warsaw, we only had to carry what we have on our back, see. So she says, Wanda, you have my fur coat. I'm going to wear another. She was very wealthy.

So she wore one fur coat. I was wearing another fur coat. All night long, we were putting gold-- see, money had no value. So the only thing what we had of value is gold and diamonds. So I remember we had soaps. So she was making holes in the soap and sticking the diamond and go in the soap.

So I had a whole suitcase full with that, with gold. She had on the suitcase. I lost her in the meantime. And I'm standing next to another woman. And she says, well, you're scared to run-- he says, hold my hands, we're both going to run.

My father, I remember he said to me, whenever you're going to be in trouble-- and my father was not a religious man-- he said, but whenever you're going to be in trouble, he says, say Shema Yisrael, [NON-ENGLISH].

So I grabbed that woman's hand, and I'll just put my head down. And like a fool what I did is I dropped this case that I



had in my hand with the gold-- and because I was so excited, and everything was too heavy for me.

See, I didn't want any nothing to distract me, so I just dropped the whole thing. I had just a fur coat on my shoulder. And we ran across these tracks, and we were free.

So what we did is we wandered around.

Did you say the Shema out loud?

I did. I did it aloud.

And she heard you?

You know, that's a very good-- that what you said. I must have said it to myself. I said it to myself, Shema Yisrael. You're right. I said it-- I did not. Obviously, I had it to myself and I quiet way, obviously. Yes. And see, I can't possibly to remember everything, but yeah.

But anyway, I said it to myself. And I was so confident then I'm going to make it. And we did. And I held her hand, and we just walked around. It was very late at night. And I said to her, where are we going to go, now?

I was still scared, because we had papers. See, we had papers as non-Jews already. I forgot to mention to you previously that based on this birth certificate that I had, I had made a Kennkarte. See, all the time that I was in Warsaw, I was still very unsure, because of the fact that I knew that they might be after me, the Germans that was looking for me.

And after two months, I kind of lost my fear, because if they didn't come after two months, I felt that this is probably forgotten, the whole thing. Or they never looked and never pursued it any longer.

But what I did is, based on my birth certificate, I went to a German office, and I made a Kennkarte, which is like a passport, see, where I had to put my fingerprints. And when I had this, I was very sure of myself. See what I mean, because this was my fingerprints. So once when I had that, I was just felt very comfortable.

But my Kennkarte and my passport said I was from Warsaw. And wherever I would go they would look for your papers. They always stopped you. And the passport said I was from Warsaw. And anybody that was in Warsaw obviously participated in the uprising-- not the Jewish uprising, but the Polish uprising.

And that's what they were looking for. So I said to her, don't you know when the Germans going to stop us, look at our Kennkarte saying that we are from Warsaw, they're going to put us in prison-- I mean, take us to a concentration camp.

So we walked around. It was late at night. We looked and look and looked for a small house, something that would be very little, something that is going to look very poor, because these people don't ask questions.

We saw a little, like a little tiny village. We knock at the door, and a old man opens the door. And he says, what do you want? And we said we are from Poland-- we are from Warsaw. When he heard we are from Warsaw, he opened the door. And he didn't know what to do with us-- come in, come in, come in.

See, the Poles looked upon the Polish people that made the uprising like the greatest heroes. They love them, because they made that uprising. They fought. Just like they look at the solidarity now, the same thing. But we fought against them, you see what I mean.

So he let us in. And there were two old people. Was a daughter that was about 40-years-old, and she was a single woman. He took us in. We stayed there for about a couple of months with them. But I couldn't go any place, because the Germans knew that a lot of people were running away, just like we did. So there were constantly raids on these people.

I remember one incident. I'll never forget it. I was in the house, but I was constantly on the guard, because I knew that

they're going to come some days. I'm a very cautious person, because I always feel I'm better off being safe than sorry. And I was always suspicious that something's going to happen.

And I had a certain intuition. One day, I am in the house. Suddenly, somebody knocked very strong. In the house I was in the bedroom. Knocked at the door, and I thought to myself, must be Germans.

And in Poland, they had those very high beds with the blanket was very long. The first thing what I did, I slipped under the bed right away. They knocked at the door. And when they knocked at the door, they opened the door where my bedroom was.

The only thing what I could see is the German boots. She didn't say anything, obviously. They opened the door, and they looked inside. And they continue. I mean, it happens there were so many incidents that, when I think about it, how safe I was-- it was just incredible that I was-- thank God, I was lucky that God really looked out for me.

But I used to see my sister. Every week we used to see each other. My third-- I'm going back. I'm kind of jumping from one thing to another one. My sister-- the one that I told you, my middle sister, could not stay in Germany-- in Poland because the Poles is recognizing her.

She had a terrible life. She had an awful experience. There was-- a Polish man raped her, and she was just very young. And finally, she went to Germany, because Germans could not tell a Jew. She volunteer as a Pole working in fields or in the factory. See, and she was saved. She wasn't starving. She worked hard, but she was safe.

After the war, we all met. But my sister, the older one, we were in contact all the time. She was very lucky. See, what happened to her, she was liberated. She lived on the other side of Vistula. You know, Warsaw is divided. I live on one part of Vistula River. She lived on another side in a small town. So she was liberated by the Germans-- by the Russians.

She was liberated. She was liberated for eight months when I was still on the Germans for eight months. Anyway, I lived with this-- I mean, I stayed with the old woman. And I knew I could not stay there any longer, because first of all, she was poor. They had nothing to eat, and I couldn't stay there.

And I was looking for a job or some kind of position. There was nothing. This Polish woman disappear. She went somewhere else. We had to split, because there was nothing for us to do.

I read that somewhere in the paper that the Germans are looking for Polish women to work in their kitchen on the front, while they continue on the front. I said, I have no, I have nothing. What can I do? I'm going to starve or I'm going to get killed here. I said, this is the chance I'm going to have to take. You had to take chances.

I went to the Germans. And I volunteer for this job to work in the kitchen. There must have been about 60 or 70 women. Out of the 70 women, they chose 8, and I was among them to work in the kitchen with the Germans.

What can I tell you? We didn't know what we're getting into. Whatever the trouble, and where they fought, they took us along. We were the kitchen. We were the cook. We were the cooks, see what I mean.

So we're going from one hell to another hell. See what I mean, the Russians, where they were fighting the Germans, they didn't know that we were there. So I was just in the same danger like the Germans were. It was just incredible.

I want to tell you a incident that I didn't tell anybody that. Do you know, one time, the whole-- I mean the Germans and the high officials Germans with us, we were going toward Germany already now backing out, because Russians were coming in, see. And the Germans knew already at that point that, closer to 1944, they knew that they were losing the war. And the Germans were chasing them.

So what happened is we were-- let's see, where was this? I don't know, it must have been about maybe 300 or 400 miles from close to the German border. And middle of the night, all of the sudden, the Germans come. They never touch the women.

Middle of the night, the Germans come. And they say that-- I don't know, there must have been a general or even not a general, a very high official. And he came in obviously from another town. I don't know exactly, because there's a tremendous big tumult.

They're looking for women, girls, to have fun with. If I can tell you that I was so lucky all the life-- every one had been raped except me. I mean, I would have told you that. Like I told you, I always look exceptionally young. When I was 15, I looked like 12.

And the Germans loved me. They love me. They said-- I was so lucky. I have to tell you, it was just incredible how lucky I was. There was one German, he says, you're such a little girl, you're so innocent. He says-- so what they did-- obviously they gave away all the other women except me.

So in the morning when I woke up, and they told me that everyone was raped. I want to tell you, it just broke my heart. There was one woman that I was crazy about. She was so intelligent. She was Polish. I loved her. And then another girl my age, maybe a little older than I am, but she was very mature I was so close to. I was crazy about her. You know, after the incident, somehow she was not the same anymore. They were all raped except me.

Anyway, the Russians were coming closer and closer. We heard the bombarding all the time. The Germans were running away. And here we was with Germans. I said, my God, if the Russians are going to come, they would take me so I'm going to prostitute or something. We got to run away from them.

So we all got together, and we start. We run away from the Germans. We were constantly run. We run away from the Germans. So we went back to the Russians. We went back to the Poles in the farm.

When we start to-- I'll tell you when we start running away. When we notice that all the Germans-- they were with us-- some of the officers begin to take off their clothes, uniforms, put civilian uniforms. Or the high official put on Wehrmacht, which is the plain soldiers. From then, we said, you know, we're in trouble. We got to run, right now.

Because if the Russian come in, and they see us with them, they're going to shoot us on the spot. That's what they did. There were a lot of Russians that collaborated with the Germans. And when they came, they shot them on the spot.

So what we did, we run away from the Germans and went to the Polish villages with the Poles. All night long, they were shooting, because they were coming. The Russians are coming in. Finally, all night long, they were shooting. In the morning, the Russian came in-- from one hell to another hell.

The Russian came like [NON-ENGLISH], like wild animals. You hear this-- never forget it. The father and the son-- devushki, where are devushki. It means, where are-- devushki means girls. The first thing what they want to do is rape, the Russians.

And they were going to Berlin. The only thing what they went, to Berlin. They were so-- there was so much hate. They had to do what-- they were incredible, just wanted to go to Germany to Berlin. To Berlin, they were just-- well, anyway, the Russian, the father, was drunk, unbelievable.

And the son must've been about 19. And the father must have been about, I don't know, maybe 35. I don't know, 49, maybe 42, also very young looking. Never touched me, never touched me. I was, I'll tell you, it was just a miracle, a miracle.

All through this time that I went, I was untouched. I was so lucky. I mean, when I think about it. Was this woman, and here was the rape. The son was wonderful. The son, he says to him, the young girls, don't bother them, daddy. He took the father away. I remember that very vividly in mind.

Anyway, from that time, the Russian came in, I was already liberated, thank God. So what can I do? I have to go back to Warsaw, to find someone that's still alive. But you know. I was very far away from Poland. See, from Lodz where I was

born, from Warsaw, there was no transportation. All the little transportation there, it was for the soldiers, for the Russian soldiers, for the Polish soldiers. They were going back and forth, see.

So what I did is I walked. I made about 20 miles a day, walk toward Poland every single day. In the morning, I start walking. I remember like now, my feet were completely sore. So I remember I took the shoes off, and I took off. Then I put them back on, then I stopped again.

And at night, I stopped with the farmers. See, I was not afraid, because the Polish didn't bother you when you said we were not Jews. They didn't bother anybody. Never after the war, never identified myself until the last minute. I stop on the road and told them I'm going back to look for my family, that I was taken by the Germans to work, and I'm going now back to Warsaw.

And I stop at night, and they fed me. And during the day when I was hungry, they fed me, the farmers. And I continued back. And then in the meantime, sometimes, I got a ride. And sometimes, I got a ride by trains, and not in the train, just holding outside of the train.

It's incredible when I think about it, how brave I was. And now, it's funny how you, when you settle down, you're just like a different person. Finally, the only thing what I wanted to do, I wanted to find my sister. She never looked for me.

I went to Warsaw back-- it was everything was bombed-- and to try to find out whether she looked for me. No. Then I went to the city, the small town that she lived outside of Warsaw, to all the people, tried to find the people that she worked for. So they gave me some contact where she is.

So I went to some people. They told me, she's here. And I went to the next place. Finally, at the end of it, they told me she's in the Lublin. Lublin is a very big city. And a lot of Polish Jews, after the war, settled there and looked for survivors, for family.

But finally, when I arrived already on Lublin, I went to, like, it was like a Jewish center where all the survivors registered themselves. And I said, do you know anybody by that name and where is she? And they told me exactly where she is. She was still working for a Polish professor, they told me.

She didn't know I survived. And I want to tell you that I arrived there. Finally, when I arrived over there, I knocked at the door-- and they let me in. He was a professor of history, this man, a Polish man. And I told him who I was. And I had my sister here. Here said, well, she's not here.

My heart was beating. I said, where's my sister? Well, your sister is taking typing lessons. She's living with us, and she's doing some housework, and she's learning how to type. And I said, well-- said, you're welcome to stay here and wait until she comes.

And I'll tell you when she came and she saw me, it was just such a reunion that I can't begin to tell you. It was just incredible. She thought I was killed in Warsaw during the uprising. It was a miracle. Nobody knew that through hells-- I mean, not only through what was the ghetto. There was one ghetto now, and we got a second uprising, here. So we stay there.

He says, this professor told us, you can stay with us as long as you want to. But he says to us, I know that you want to look for your family. I think my sister did tell him-- I don't exactly remember whether she told him or not. Only certain things that are very vivid in my memory. I don't remember whether she identified herself or whether-- what happened.

But he was very nice to us. And he says, you can stay with us. But she says, we have to go back to Lodz to find out, because that's where we're from. So we said goodbye to them, and we went back to Lodz.

In Lodz, again, we had no money. So we had nothing. but my sister said to me that she remembered that, in Warsaw when she was walking one day, she met a friend of hers that also survived. She met her in the street. And this friend of hers went, before the war to her.

See, my sister is older from me, about four years older. And this friend of her went to Gymnasium. See, Gymnasium was like a high school, but the high school you had to pay. It was private. See, not everybody could afford it. You had to have money to go to a Gymnasium.

Well, this friend of hers, she went with my sister in the Gymnasium. And then after-- during the war, she met her in the street by coincidence. And she was very optimistic. She said, you know what, I am in monastery right now with my sister. We're going to survive, she says. My sister was very depressed, and she was very serious.

Don't worry, we can all survive, she says. And if you survive, she says, we have a very big apartment building in Lodz. And she gave her her address. That's where we going to meet. So when we arrived in Lodz, she says, we have no place to go, we have no money, we have nothing. She says, you know, I remember young [NON-ENGLISH] told us that when she survive, that's where she's going to be.

Said, let's take a chance and see what she's alive. We arrived there. And we ask this janitor outside, if this girl survive, [NON-ENGLISH]? Says, yes, this is her apartment building, they live in one of her apartments.

We walked in there. It was like a paradise. It was gorgeous apartment you've ever seen. Oh, they already fixed it up. It was so beautiful. And they were so lovely to us. She said, you can stay with us as long as you want to. We stay with these girls, they were some wonderful girls.

So we stayed there. Then my sister, the one from Germany, found out about us. She came there, and all the three of us were reunited together. It was just great. And we stayed there for a long time.

Those people who lived in the apartment, people who owned the apartment, they were Jewish, too?

You mean the girls?

The girls, yes.

The girls that my sister went to-- yes, they were Jewish girls.

Her girlfriend, they were Jewish girls?

They were Jewish girls. They survive in monastery. The two sisters survive in monastery. See, I'm looking for them everywhere. We can't find them.

Yeah.

We've been several places, here. And we register with the community. They can't find them. I would love to see them, again. We just lost contact with the-- they didn't know where they are. But I know they survived, they are alive.

So and then after that we came to-- we were in Lodz. And then after Lodz, we-- I met my husband then in Lodz. We worked in Lodz in a very big store. It was like a big delicatessen store. And there some of the survivors have opened it up.

And these survivors survived in the ghetto and was in Lodz ghetto. And obviously, they had a lot of money, because they open up fantastic big store. And we worked there. And we had-- we worked there. Was food, they gave us food and had excellent benefits with these people.

And so what happened is after that, I met my husband. And then we went to Germany. I don't want-- to get in all the details. I want to tell a little about my kids, too. And we went to-- we stay in Germany for three years. My husband met his brother. He found a brother.

He comes from a family of nine brothers and sisters. And he and his brother are the only survivors. My whole family was completely-- how do you say it?

Annihilated?

Annihilated, except my three sisters, which I feel very fortunate that I have three sisters still.

Did you ever find out what happened to your parents?

My father-- and my father was taken into concentration camp. And they were both killed, both of them. Yes, they just died tragically. My mother was-- I understand my mother did not-- first, they didn't want to go to concentration camp, so my father was walking with another family.

And my mother hid in a barn. And in the barn when she was hiding, they were all hiding in the barn. And in the morning obviously, some farmers found out that the Jews were hiding in the farms.

They came to the barn. And my sister told me that. My middle sister stayed with them. They came to the barn and says, you, all Jews better leave, if not they're going to send Gestapo after you. And my mother refused to leave the farm, that barn.

She says, I don't care what happen to me, I am tired of running. So we don't know, but we assume that she was shot there in that barn. My father left with my daughter, because he was trying to provide some kind of a escape for her.

But someone, they saw him. They said that he was taken in concentration camp, and he was killed. No one from the town survived, from this last transport-- Zarnow where-- when we were.

See, my father had such a fantastic insight and foresight that if he wouldn't have sent us out, we would have all died, because no one survive. Can you believe that out of this tremendous small town that only three of us survived. That's all.

But I want to tell you what I'm very proud of, because this probably is ending very soon. What I'm proud the most of is of my four children that I have. I have four wonderful, committed, wonderful kids. My oldest son is 32-years-old. He's a doctor in NIH.

I have a daughter is a social worker. And she's also with us, and she's 29-years-old. And I have a daughter that is in journalism and in public relations. And she's only 26. And I have a little boy, 13-years-old.

Really?

There was [INAUDIBLE]. I'm very, very proud of my family, because I feel that they are the future of-- I mean, this is the only thing that are left. And this is behind it-- and that I'm leaving behind. And this is the reason that we survive.

I mean, I'm so happy that I survive. Many people come up to me, ask me, don't you-- they have a very pessimistic view. And they say, I feel guilty that I survive. I've never felt that way. I've never felt guilty. I feel that God gave me, somehow, by a miracle, I did survive.

There must have been a reason why. And I think that survive, because I have left-- I'm leaving something behind. And this is, I think, the greatest contribution that I could give-- is my family. And they are very committed and wonderful Jews.

They are all Jewish and committed.

Very, very committed. We are very involved in the community. And I'm very involved and with the Jewish [INAUDIBLE] Federation. I have been a Vice President of the Hadassah in Richmond. And my son is very involved. My daughter is very committed.

My other daughter lived in Israel. The one that is 29-years-old lived in Israel for three years and went to Hebrew University. She's very, very committed. And this is what I'm very proud of-- that my children are very Jewish-oriented and proud being Jewish.

That's the main, most important thing-- that they don't have to be ghetto Jews. They keep their head high. So they are Jews, and I don't know myself what to say about it anymore. And so I'm instilling these things in my kids.

And the thing that I feel that it's so important. And out of three children I have, and three of them-- I don't know about my youngest one yet-- but all three of them are married to Jewish people. And this is something that I can be very proud of.

And I remember my oldest son made a statement-- you know, being a doctor, he's been surrounded with so many nurses, and it's very tempting. And really, he said-- he always said this to us, he says, mother and dad, I could never marry somebody that's not Jewish, because I couldn't do this to you-- you went through too much in life that I would have to marry somebody who's not Jewish.

And all my kids-- I have a wonderful daughter. This one here, she is a little sweetheart, she's a doll. I am so proud when I look at them. That gives me-- this is the biggest accomplishment. And I can really tell you, this is my greatest accomplishment.

Nothing that what my husband did and what I have done but the kids, and that I have raised four wonderful human beings. And I think this is the greatest contribution than anybody can give.

You came through this with your mental health and your strength intact.

Exactly, exactly. And I've never, never looked--

Amazing.

And I have never hated, either I have never instilled this in my kids, never. Because I feel that you have to-- you should never forget. I mean, you should remember. You should remember, but don't carry hatred, don't hate. Remember but don't hate. because hate can be very destructive, and it's also uses too much energy.

And I don't want this, and I don't want my kids to be that way either. And they're very well adjusted people. They're happy and adjusted-- and my son and myself, too. And I look forward in life. I don't look back.

And I look forward. I'm very optimistic about things, and I'm very happy to be alive, that's all. And we went to Israel two years ago. And my daughter-- when she couldn't go, but my other daughter went. And she got so much out of it, too.

Like I said, they just wouldn't miss it for the world. I mean, my son-in-law feels the same way. I'm still on tape or not?

Mhm.

My son-in-law, even when he marry my daughter, my wonderful little girl, he gave a promise that he's going to continue the legacy, too. So it's we're all in it, in other words. And they-- once when I'll be gone, they'll be continuing.

Thank you so much, so much. You're lovely, really. You made me feel so comfortable to talk to.