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Testimony of Ziuta Grünhut

Tape 1 of 6

My name is Ziuta Grunhut (maiden name Grynberg). I was born in Cracow (Poland) on October 11, 1927. To start my testimony I will describe to you my childhood years. Generally speaking I had a happy childhood. I lived in an affluent family. Although we were not very rich, we had a rather comfortable life. My father was an architect and owned his own construction company. We spent our winter vacations in Zakopane and summer vacations in various places in Europe. I attended a public Polish school and my older brother attended a Polish public secondary school. In some respects we were not a conventional Jewish family. We did not keep kosher in our house and my father did not attend regular services in the synagogue. However he attended the High Holidays services each year. At home we spoke Polish but we felt ethnically Jewish and we observed major Jewish holidays. My parents met when they were both members of a Zionist organization. My father Zygmunt Grynberg and mother Berta (maiden name Miller) fell in love while both were active in the Zionist movement. Their love for each other was very strong. In addition to Polish we also spoke German at home. Knowledge of German came to our home from my mother's side of the family. My grandmother (on my mother's side) lived in Sudeten. I remember my grandmother's recipe book which was written in German with the Gothic style. My parents frequently talked among them in German. In addition, my father finished the officer's school in Vienna in 1915. I am still in possession of his officer school graduation certificate. My mother's family live in various towns of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in Vienna, Bielsko and the area of Sudeten.

German language was used daily. I understood German and was able to read German language newspapers. Later in life, after the war, started to hate the Germans and stopped reading or speaking German. Today I regret making that decision. As a family we had many friends. My father frequently travelled abroad. Typically, during summer vacations, my father was not joining us since he was involved in architectural work during the summer building season. He built many homes in Cracow. Typically each home which was built in Cracow used to have a plate near the entrance. The plate contained the information about the architect and the year when it was constructed. During a recent visit to Cracow I couldn't find any of the plates although I do remember the many homes that my father built. At home, we did not speak Yiddish although my father knew that language. He was a descendant of a more traditional Jewish family which also kept a kosher kitchen. When my grandparents from my father's side used to visit our home they would only drink some tea. My mother did not speak Yiddish. We had lots of fun when my mother used to attempt to speak Yiddish by mispronouncing German words. In reality, Jews in Cracow spoke mostly Polish. Even the religious Jews spoke a very good Polish.

My wartime memory starts with a stressful time just before the outbreak of the war in 1939.

On April the 20th, before the outbreak of the war, my brother who was 5 years older than I was sent to England to study architecture. It was clear that as a Jew and because of some prevailing laws about Jews studying at the Polish universities, my brother could never study architecture in Poland. The process of enrolling my brother was helped by an old friend of my father from the times of WWI. This friend, living in England, promised my father that he will help my brother to enroll in the school of architecture. My brother agreed to leave immediately to London. It seems that despite our assimilation my brother did feel a subtle anti-Semitic pressure during his days in the secondary school. As the summer approached my brother choose not to come home for vacations that year due to the short time between his arrival to London and the start of the vacation season. He choose to stay to improve his skills in English.. Instead, my parents decided that my brother will come home for Christmas vacations. My mother worried about my 16 year old brother being alone in England. The difficult situation in which my brother found himself in London (not prepared for the winter season, lack of proper clothes, etc) actually saved his life. Eventually he completed his architectural studies and eventually became a successful urban planner. About the time when my brother left for England, a cousin of my mother has moved

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in with us. Although he lived in Krakow prior to moving in with us , he was forced to do this because of his Austrian citizenship. As a result of the 1938 Anschluss of Austria by Hitler, Polish authorities declared him to be a citizen of a foreign country subject to arrest. Because of this situation he abandoned his apartment and moved in illegally to live with us for some time. Eventually, he obtained documents to travel to Palestine. It was thanks to this cousin who lived through the Anschluss and was better informed about what may be coming in the future, my mother was persuaded to send my brother Romek to go to England. As summer months were approaching, we started to plan our vacations. We intended to travel to Constanta, a Rumanian port city on the coast of the Black Sea. Simultaneously with our planning, an event occurred that made us change our plans. A German battle ship Gneisenau has docked at the port of Gdansk. The Polish government declared that to be an act of aggression. In view of the uncertainty of the situation, we decided to change our vacation plans. Instead of traveling to Rumania we decided to rent a house in the town of Muszyna for one month. Since the war didn't break out right away, we extended our stay by another month. On August 25 we received a phone message from my father's office, urging us to return immediately to Cracow. We were told that my father was called to report for military duty in the army. At that time my father was 43 years old and was a reserve officer in an artillery unit. We saw the war atmosphere already in the train. The train was full of military men, some drunk, some fighting for a seat. In Cracow we couldn't get a cab. My father and his younger brother were busy getting in order the finances of the company as was typical during the end of the summer season.

In my life, my father was the hero of my childhood. As expected he reported for duty but was released as not needed at that time. I still have the document that states that my father has reported for duty but was released. My mother was designated as a leader of anti- aircraft unit for an area of about one square block around our house. Although Cracow was not heavily bombed on 1st of September, a few bombs were actually dropped on the city. The situation and the atmosphere in Cracow have suddenly changed. People were spilling into the streets trying to find out what was happening. The radio announced the mobilization of all men capable of carrying a weapon. Radio announcements directed all able men to leave town. Suddenly rumors spread that all radio announcements were originated by the Germans. My father, his three brothers and a brother-in-law decided to run away on September the 3rd. We stayed home with our maid Ruzia. Ruzia was a wonderful and trustworthy person. She was 23 years old and has been our maid for about 3 years. The Germans entered the town on Tuesday. Their first order was that anyone in possession of any weapons must turn them in under penalty of death. Most of the orders issued by the Germans were punishable by death if disobeyed. Ruzia and my mother have turned in the two handguns that my father kept in the house. We had no news from my father. The waiting period has begun. It appears that some major in the Polish army decided to make a stand against the Germans in the town of Rozwadow in eastern Poland. Rozwadow was a heavily industrialized town. This major was forcing all the men to board a train and taking them to Rozwadow. My uncles decided to run away from the train, however my father choose to stay and obey the order. As it happened, the train did not have an engine and the major could not get any other engine. All the men were let go. My father, instead of going to Lwow decided to go to Lublin. When we received news that my father was in Lublin, our maid Ruzia went to Lublin to bring him back to Cracow. It turns out that their paths have crossed since my father was able to get a permit from the Germans to travel from Lublin to Cracow. Later Ruzia also returned to Cracow. At that time the Germans were organizing roundups to get people to do physical work such as carrying coal. My school year started late. The building where the school was located was turned into a German field hospital and I was directed to go to my school in a different building. Before Christmas the school principal announced that all Jewish children were not allowed to attend school as of that moment. Schools for Polish children continued to function. The Jewish community organized secret schools. We had a Polish girl who used to bring us the assignments from her school. In such a way , we were following the same classwork as was done in the Polish school. I don't remember exactly when we started to wear the armbands. They were white with the blue star of David. I do remember exactly when the ghetto was closed and we were moved to Plaszow. At the beginning of the occupation the Germans also were confiscating the radios. Sometimes early in 1940 my father became sick. I

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was still attending the secret school and we still lived in our house which was not in the Jewish area of Cracow. My recollection that in the winter of 1941-1942 the Germans were confiscating jewelry and furs owned by the Jews. This started to happen after their defeat at Stalingrad. Since we lived outside of the Jewish area on Bonderwoska Street at the center of Cracow, our jewelry and furs were not taken away from us until we were forced to move into the ghetto. My recollection is that the ghetto was formed during the winter of 1940-41 at the end of the so called snow work. At the age of 12 I received an Ausweiss and begun the work clearing the snow off the roads. I received a Kennkarte when I was 14 years old while we still lived in our house. At that time two Germans moved in and took 2 rooms for their use. Another room was taken over by a Jewish family from Czechoslovakia. After some time the two Germans moved out and in their place moved in an Austrian family from Vienna ,Friedrich and Emma Holzinger. Friedrich was employed by the Cracow city administration and dealt with food cards. In short time it appeared that friendly relationship developed between my father and the Holzingers.. Since the law at that time forbade for Jews to employ non Jews, Ruzia was registered as a maid working for the Holzingers while she was still paid by my parents. Ruzia cooked for all and we ate jointly lunches and dinners with the Holzingers. Because the Holzingers ate our food they gave us two food cards in return. This arrangement lasted until we were forced to move into the ghetto a few days after it was closed off in March of 1941. It appears that when we moved out from our apartment the Czech family has moved out also from the apartment but they were not moved into the ghetto because they were not Polish Jews. They rented some other apartment and I don't know what eventually happened to them.

I need to digress here. I want to talk briefly about the snow work during winter. This work was very difficult and degrading for my father. My father knew a lot of Polish people who saw him clearing the snow. Although it was possible to pay off someone to do this work, my father never did it. Sometimes Ruzia used to done an armband and used to do my father's work. She also used to visit us in the ghetto.

The Jewish ghetto was set up in the district of Podgorze. Jews from the Jewish quarter in Kazimierz were forced to settle in Podgorze. The reason we stayed a long time in our apartment was that in the apartment also lived the Holzingers. It seems that in buildings which were occupied by the Germans, the plates at the front of the buildings which identified them as " Jewish buildings" were removed in our case because of the presence of the Holzingers. In the end we were forced to move into the ghetto. The occupancy level of the Podgorze apartments was predetermined by the Germans to be 3 people per one window. This meant that if one room had two windows, six people were forced to live in that room. In our case , due to the fact that my cousins remained hidden with their nanny in some village, our living arrangement was adequate. We got two rooms. In one room lived my parents, in the other my aunt and I. As we left the apartment on the Bonderowska we were able to transfer our furniture into the new apartment in the ghetto. I believe that although the first year in the ghetto was difficult, but it was not as difficult as being in the Warsaw ghetto. We were able to survive by selling off furniture and other items in order to be able to buy food. In addition , my father started to work for one of his former employees and was a de facto the chief of the construction bureau. This was not an official position, but due to his education he was effectively helping his ex - employee to run the office . His earnings from this work, helped us to survive before and during our stay in the ghetto. Ruzia became the housekeeper for this ex-employee and thus she was in contact with my father on a daily basis. While I was in the ghetto I started to learn English and sawing. That situation lasted until October of 1941 when I reached my 14th birthday. At that time I was forced to work 12 hour days at the metal forming factory called Metal Chrome. I performed work in galvanization and plating. That factory was owned by Jews prior to the war. *At this point in the interview Ziuta is showing some pictures taken in 1942, from her days at the factory.* I believe that the first year in the ghetto was in some ways easier than being outside of the ghetto. Even though there was a curfew and many limitations, we were not among the Poles whom we couldn't trust, we were among the Jews and felt safer. *At this point Ziuta is showing a picture of her with her grandparents taken in 1934. She also shows a picture of Ruzia as she looked in 1995 shortly before her death. Ruzia was recognized as a Righteous Among the Nations in 1995.*

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I remember teaching two small boys who were in 2nd grade. These boys were orphans. As a 15 years old girl I was able to teach these children. I remember attending a Yom Kippur service in a makeshift synagogue. One had the impression that somehow life went on. However, the situation changed dramatically after the Passover of 1942. At that time about 50 well known Jewish members of Cracow society were taken to Auschwitz. In short time these citizens have died from some diseases. If their families wanted to get the ashes of their loved ones, they had to pay for them. In the ghetto the leader of the Judenrat was Simcha Spira. Although some people were critical of Spira, I don't know of any bad things that he was guilty off. However, some of the 50 people who were taken to Auschwitz did not like Spira. Among them was Philip Zweig. There was also the Jewish Police. Among many functions, their job was to find Jews who were hiding in order to avoid their deportation from the ghetto. In June of 1942 occurred the first deportation from the ghetto. Jews were asked to report to the Civil Abtailung. If they were deemed to be useful for work they received a stamp allowing them to remain in the ghetto. During the first deportation parents of my father and my father's sister did not receive the stamp. People in general did not know what was in store for them, they did not know that not getting a stamp meant death. Some people who were sick, including my grandmother, were deemed unsuitable for travel. Those people were shot and killed in the ghetto. Soon, the Germans decided that too many people remained in the ghetto. During the next deportation, those who received a blue card could remain in the ghetto. It turns out that on some days people people were forced to do maintenance work such as cleaning of the soldiers barracks. On those days one could get a blue card. There were also letter designations on the Kennkarte depending on the type of work one performed. For example, my mother was working in a large factory which produced uniforms for the German army. Her Kennkarte had a stamp letter W for Wehrmacht on it. My father, working for his ex-employee had a stamped letter Z for Zivil (civilian). Since I worked in a metal forming factory which supplied parts directly for armament needs, my card was stamped R for Ristung (military needs). This was the best designation. I got my blue card. After every deportation, the Germans were reducing the size of the ghetto, forcing people to relocate to new quarters.

Tape 2 of 6

Ziuta is showing a total of five different photos.

1st photo is that of my father's officer's document with his photo in the document. 2nd photo is that of my father with friends. It shows them wearing the armbands. The 3rd photo is that of me and my future husband Emil Grunhut. That picture is from 1942. The 4th photo is that of my father's Kennkarte. The Kennkarte is false and the name in it is Zygmunt Gorski. The 5th photo is my mother's Kennkarte. The 6th exhibit is a document which is a pass issued to my father. The pass declares that my father was not needed for the defensive services in the Polish army at the outbreak of the war.

All Kennkarts were issued to us as if we were Poles, not Jews. My name on the Kennkarte was Krug Juzefa. A big change occurred in my life when I started physical work in the metallurgical factory. When I was returning home from work, I noticed that my hands were harmed by the chemicals and metals which were in contact with my skin. My hands were black and no amount of washing could remove the damage. At that age I thought that black hands were going to ruin my life . I didn't realize at the time what was important in life. But I was supported by my wonderful parents and soon came to the conclusion that the color of my hands was not that important. During the war I was not afraid of dying, I was afraid of being left alone, without my parents. And in the end, this is what happened to me. At some time my factory was closed and I was transferred to a larger factory which was called FAKS before the war. My father still worked outside of the ghetto with his Polish ex-employee. There were quite a few people who were working in Cracow , outside of the ghetto. My aunt who survived , also worked outside as a bookkeeper. I worked in the ghetto because that was where the factory was located. People who worked outside were also the sources of information about what was happening in the outside world. I remember that on some occasions my father my father was able to smuggle in some food. One time he brought a chicken hidden in his pants. Some guards used to confiscate the food. After the June

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deportation we thought that we will have some peace for some time. The next deportation happened in October. Before October, I believe it was in July, the family agreed that if we ever become somehow separated from each other, we agreed that we should then attempt to meet and reunite at my father's work place. We picked this place because Ruzia worked there. During the October deportation, everyone was to report to their place of work. One day, my father returned from work badly shaken. It turned out that at his place of work showed up his youngest brother Adam. His hair was shaved and his body was full of lice. It turned out that he was unable to escape to the Soviet side when the war broke out and ended up in the Janowski camp near Lwow. He was able to run away from that camp by crawling out from a mass of dead Jews. We couldn't understand how he managed to travel from Lwow to Cracow in his condition. In addition, he did not look like an Aryan. When he arrived at my father's work place he was incoherent and started to tell stories which didn't make any sense. After his arrival he was given a bath and a new set of clothing. After a few days my father brought his brother into the ghetto. I was afraid of my uncle. He was continuously talking about some treasures. At the time when my uncle showed up in the ghetto I was not working because my factory was waiting for some materials to be delivered. I was afraid of being left with my uncle. In addition, he was constantly hungry and ate anything that was available. My mother was telling me how to feed him when I was left alone with him. He tended to lie in bed and talk some nonsense. In top of all his problems, he got sick with diarrhea. We took him to see Dr. Aleksandrowicz who decided that Adam should eat grated apples to stop the diarrhea. It turned out that Adam used to get some apples from a vendor whom he was telling that my father will pay for them. He did not however tell my father about this arrangement. After some time my uncle recovered fully. On October 11, he and another friend have organized a birthday party for me. The party included an orchestra that my uncle organized. When the October 1942 deportation happened, my uncle did not have a legal status in the ghetto. In addition to that, at the same time, in our one room apartment also lived my mother's aunt Regina who also happened to be illegal. When the deportation day arrived, my uncle and my aunt Zosia Kempler hid in the attic of my building. Since the Germans could not find my aunt Zosia who was hidden, they took instead my aunt Regina and my grandfather. During the deportation, my father and I reported to our workplaces. My mother went to visit her brother in another building in the ghetto. When my father and I were leaving our building we saw the most horrible scene outside. People were being chased to the trains and some were being shot to death. We couldn't even walk to our workplaces. We hid in the entrance of some building in the center of the ghetto.. Somebody whom my father knew in that building allowed us to stay with them throughout the day. We survived the October deportation. During that day we saw a group of people standing in the middle of a small plaza. They stood there throughout the whole day. It turned out that they were selected by the Germans because they had some unique skills which the Germans needed. They too survived the deportation. Also, people who had a chance to report to their work stations were spared the deportation. Soon after the October deportation, the Germans decided to build the camp in Plaszow. The leader of the Judenrat , Dawid Gutter, was told by the Germans to supply five architects to help build the Plaszow camp. My father and four other Jews Bagier, Wolfhiller, Sztil and Goldberg were selected. My father became the chief engineer of that group. In the beginning , the man responsible to set up Plaszow was one named Pilarczyk. He was a common criminal who did some shootings in the ghetto. Later a man named Miller became a commandant of Plaszow. After Miller , Amon Goeth became the commandant. At that time my father and his group could not return to the ghetto. They had to remain at all times in Plaszow. In the beginning, when it was built, Plaszow was a labor camp. Later it became a concentration camp. During the labor camp phase there was complete lawlessness inside of the camp. The Germans were shooting people at random. During that time I still lived in the Cracow ghetto. About 10 days before the liquidation of the ghetto, my mother decided to join my father in Plaszow. During that time the ghetto was divided into two parts: ghetto A and ghetto B. In ghetto A were placed mostly elderly people and children. On March 13,1943 the ghetto was liquidated. Everyone who was not sent to Plaszow was killed. In early 1943 (after the German defeat at Stalingrad) the Germans were confiscating everyones jewelry and furs. In addition they were also taking objects made from bronze.

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My friend Emil, who later became my husband, helped me pack my belongings to take to Plaszow. On the way to the camp in Plaszow I had to shed some of the belongings because I wasn't physically fit to carry them all. I was 15 years old. When I finally arrived to the camp I only was able to carry a small handbag. Some of the things that I left on the road were later found in Plaszow. I moved into a barrack in which my parents lived. In that barrack lived families of those who were employed in building the Plaszow camp. We slept in bunk beds. While I was still in the ghetto, my mother who was then in Plaszow with my father, was very concerned about my being alone. I still worked in the same factory- Ristung on Lwowska street while living in Plaszow. In that factory Poles were also employed. Because of that we were able to get the news of what was happening outside the ghetto. Since the metal factory was outside the ghetto, Ruzia was able to come to this factory and at times she used to bring some food. I believe that inhabitants of pre-war Cracow who now lived in Plaszow had some contacts with the outside world and fared a bit better than other people in the camp. Bringing food into into Plaszow was very risky. At some point, 59 men and a woman were executed for smuggling bread into Plaszow. Others caught smuggling were often whipped with fifty lashes. When leaving for and returning from work we marched in rows of four. The Germans guarded us during these marches. Some names which I remember from Plaszow were Amon Goeth the camp commandant, Branke who made selections of children who were allowed to go to Plaszow, Zdrojewski (a German), Grim, Jon. At some point in time, Goeth has given us a room which had a toilet in it. This happened when Goeth was in a good mood. When Goeth was upset he used to take away that room. Sometimes in 1943, the Germans decided to built barracks for Ukrainian guards. The three barracks were build on the three sides of a court. The fourth side was open. My father was telling me that the foundation of these buildings were too shallow and the buildings may collapse. Luckily, my father was not involved with the construction of those barracks. Indeed the barracks collapsed. The construction of these barracks was supervised by a Jewish woman called Rajter. She, like my father, was an architect. When the barracks collapsed Rajter was shot. Rajter was replaced by another architect who was from Drohobycz. In addition to Rajter, a man named Imber was also shot although I am not sure if he had anything to do with the construction of the barracks. One day, on my return from work I found out that my father was badly beaten up by the Germans fo unknown reasons. He was then called to see the commandant. I did not want him to go. I also knew that people in Plaszow had lots of respect for my father.At that time Goeth has cancelled work assignments for me and for my mother. Thus , we were confined to remain in Plaszow. Goeth also told my father that if the construction of the barracks will not be completed in one week the family will hung. My father didn't believe that the construction could be accomplished in one week. One day Goeth showed up with his mistress Mariola in our room. *At the time of this interview Mariola was still alive.* One Sunday (when people didn't work) some prisoners were hung on the plaza between the barracks. One of them was a young boy who whistled the Internationale . The whole camp was forced to watch the hanging on the appelplatz. Since we did not know if we were going to be hanged, we decided to stay in our room and wait. It turned out that Wilek Hilowicz, who was the leader of the Jewish Police , asked Amon to let us off the hanging. Amon agreed and that is how we were spared. Later, a German engineer called Wilhelm Hut became my father's boss so my father did not have to directly interact with Amon. Wilhelm Hut was a kind person. He was a barrier between my father and Goeth. In 1944, Goeth was accused of stealing from the government by not sending all the loot to Germany. He was accused of stealing by another German called Eket . Goeth was arrested. At that time in 1944, Plaszow became a concentration camp. There were some new regulations but no major changes. Quality of bread became worse. I recollect that suddenly some money from Zegota started to come into the camp. When Goeth became suspect of stealing, he decided to get rid of any potential witnesses against him. The commandant of Jewish Police Hilowicz and his wife were shot. A total of six members of the Hilowicz family and three other people were shot.

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Aparently Hilowicz and family were selling outside of the camp the food which was destined for the Jews in the camp.

In 1944 the Soviet army moved closer into Poland. We were able to receive the news about the position of the Soviet army from the BBC broadcasts. It so happened that the engineers in charge of constructions, bought a radio as a present for Wilhelm Hut. When Hut was not in the office, the engineers used to listen to BBC's Polish language transmission. In that way, we were aware of the status of the war. We knew that the Soviet army halted its advance near the town of Debica. Around that time the Germans organized the August deportation. The Germans deported around 6,000 men and same number of women. Most of these people have perished. It was during that time when Amon Goeth was being investigated and the Hilowicz family was executed. Everybody in the camp was forced to march by the gallows and observe the corpses of the executed people. After the August deportation I stopped working in the tailoring shop and was moved to work in the storage area. I was employed as a messenger. My mother worked as a cook for the site manager. I must say that during the time I was in the camp I have never starved. There was very little food but I did not starve. I was always afraid that on my return from work to the barrack I may find out that my father didn't survive the day or that he was badly beaten up. One day I went to look at the bauleitung (the construction management office) which was located at the street where the homes of the SS were located. The street was known as the " SS strasse". Before I got to the office I saw Hilewicz's wife lying face down on the street. I entered my father's office a few minutes after my father returned from seeing Goeth. Everyone in the office thought that my father will not come out alive. When Goeth saw my father, how he was dressed and how he appeared in general, he realized that my father was not involved with the stealing or smuggling like Hilewicz. He decided to let him go. After the execution of the Hiolewicz family, Goeth disappeared from the camp. About the same time, there was a public hanging of six young men. Some of the boys I knew personally. They were:Michael (Mirtek) Hirsz and Zenek Fuks. Both from Wieliczka. At that time the commandant of Plaszow was hauptsturmfuhrer Drima. After the war I did all my testimony about Plaszow in Israel. I refused to travel to Germany. I testified about the hanging of the six boys. I also testified at Goeth's trial which was conducted at the end of 1945 in Cracow. Goeth secretary was Michael (Mietek) Pemper. Pemper was the only Jew that Goeth treated with respect. When I testified, Pemper suggested that I describe to the court how Goeth treated my father. I admit that I was a bad witness at that trial. In 1944 there was the October deportation during which most of the men were sent to Gross- Rosen . Part of the people sent to Gross-Rosen were later sent on Schindler's list to Brinnlitz. Another group of deportees, mostly women, was sent to Auschwitz. Some of these women were eventually also sent to Brinnlitz. My father did not know Schindler. At the time when people were sent to Brinnlitz, my father did not believe that there exists a camp where men and women are together in one place. After the October deportation there were about six hundred people left in Plaszow. Their job was to liquidate the camp. They had to tear it down and destroy all evidence that such a camp ever existed. During that time I got sick with typhus. We were moved to the barracks that earlier were occupied by the Ukrainians. In the camp, the Ukrainians were used as guards. There even was one Latvian guard. We considered the time between October 1944 until January 14, 1945 as a time of preparation for freedom. At that time, the commandant was a low ranking older officer Schupke. The situation in the camp improved in that there were no killings or torturing. My father was able to go out to town to conduct work related to the liquidation of the camp. Apparently some people from the camp were involved in building anti- tank barriers in the city. My aunt who also worked in town was able to obtain very good quality false documents. That allowed her and her children to live on the Aryan side. She joined her children and a nanny who earlier took care of them. The children were taken by the nanny to a convent with the idea of staying there through the winter. In December 1944, my father found out that my aunt Sophie's children Hania and Bernie were denounced to the Germans. This apparently happened when before Christmas Hania was given a role of playing Mary, Jesus' mother in a play organized by the convent for the children. One of the Polish mothers in the audience was so offended by the fact that a Jewish girl was playing that role of Jesus'

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mother, that she denounced the child to the Germans. Both children of my aunt were taken away. The nanny of the children has quickly notified Ruzia who in turn notified my father who at the time still worked in town. We found out that the children were taken to a jail in Montelupich. We found out that transports of people were taken from Montelupich to Podgorze to be executed there. My friend and I decided to keep watch about these executions. We learned about the executions from observing that a day before the executions, the Germans used to stock up on cans full of gasoline as well as on wood to be used for burning the corpses . The day before the execution, my father went to see commandant Schupke and asked him to pull the children out from the group that was to be executed. The next day I did not go to work. I got a medical excuse and decided to stay home to take care of the children who were 10 and 8 years old. When my father was thanking Schupke for saving the children he answered " don't thank me, I too have grandchildren". In relation to us we felt that Schupke was not a bad person. After the war, Schupke was tried and was hanged for crimes committed prior to his taking over as commandant of Plaszow. I do regret that I decided not to testify on his trial about the children he saved. Perhaps, if I testified that he saved my aunt's two children he may have been spared the death sentence. I just couldn't do it as a survivor. I just could not testify for a Nazi in 1946.

There were times when the Germans used to pull out some young people who were fit for work from the group slated to be executed. To my knowledge, this was the only time that children were pulled out and saved. We kept the children with us throughout the whole wartime. At that time the children in Plaszow were a curiosity. Even the Germans used to come by to look at the boy who was dressed up as a girl. Today, Bernie is a professor of psychology in Atlanta and Hania is a writer and illustrator of books for children. When talking about this I see what an enormous human potential has been lost in that war. I remember when the children were saved and stayed with us , we had to find some clothes for them to wear. I picked out a nice coat for the little boy. When I asked Bernie to try it out, he refused. He told me later that the coat belonged to a boy who was in his group and who was executed. He did not want to wear that coat. On January 14th 1945 we were sent out on our march. Three days later the Soviets occupied Cracow. The children went with us. I marched with my mother in the front of the column, my father was in the back. We walked to Auschwitz. Next we were in the death march to Loslau-Wodzislaw in Silesia. From there we marched to Bergen-Belsen. At that time we became separated from my father and from the children.

(*there is a short time out in the interview)*

I would like to turn back and mention a few things that I consider important. I may not have conveyed well the sense of a never ending fear while at the same time an enduring sense of hope. Because we realized that this were extraordinary times of war, we were sustained with hope that the Germans will ultimately be defeated. We just needed to survive this time of war. We didn't want to die for someone's ideas. People sometimes die for their own ideals, but in this case, we didn't want to die because the Germans had the idea that Jews are not worthy of living. There was a day in Plaszow in May of 1944, when all inmates in the whole camp were forced to parade through the camp completely naked. Men and women paraded separately. A contingent of female SS arrived at the camp to supervise the women. In addition a special contingent of German criminals who were also kapos joined in the supervision.. The Germans created a list of people who were either too fat, too thin or too old. A week later, all the people on the list as well as all the children were taken away to Auschwitz. I remember continuous fear. When in summer we worked night shifts and the windows in the shop were open because of heat, people were afraid to doze off. We knew that the SS used to hide outside the windows and shoot to kill anyone who because of exhaustion dozed off for a moment. The fear was continuous and everywhere. At the same time, there were elements of hope. People used to gather in our kitchen in the barrack after the curfew in the ghetto. We used to read the Nazi newspapers but mainly "between" the lines. We had discussions. I was also able to correspond with my friend who was living in the Warsaw ghetto. I was able to maintain the correspondence until the day my letter returned with the note " the addressee is unknown ". It turned out that my friend and her mother were able to escape from the ghetto and survived the war hiding on the

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Aryan side with false documents. It seems that life went on regardless of the murders and executions that were happening all around us. My father, while living in the ghetto, was working in Cracow. He used to buy many different newspapers. Among them were Das Reich, Krakauer Zeitung and others. We knew about the German defeats in Africa and other places. When we lived in Cracow at the time when the two rooms in our apartment were occupied by the Germans, we used to listen to the BBC broadcast on their radio while our "guests" were out of the house.

I also remember that after the naked parade in the camp in May 1944, the Germans started to destroy the evidence of the existence of the concentration camp. The Germans ordered to dig out the mass graves of the executed Jews. They followed that with the mass burnings of the corpses. The work of digging and burning was forced on the Jews. The whole camp was saturated with the stench of the burned flesh for many weeks. The workers used wood and gasoline to burn the corpses.

Now I wish to return to the time of the death marches. We were a group of about 600 people. Among us were the two children of my aunt and a few young men who were still fit for some work. From our group which was marching on foot, about six people were able to escape. These were mostly people who were late into the war. Most of them were living on the Aryan side at the time of their arrests and still had contacts on the Aryan side. They were even dressed in normal civilian clothes which helped in their escape. The escape happened on January 14, 1945 when we marched through busy Cracow. We could not escape because it would have to be a mass escape if included were mother, father, myself and the children. Those who escaped were single and it was much easier for them to disappear into the crowd on a busy street in Cracow. We left Plaszow at about 3 PM and arrived to Cracow in the darkness of the evening. When we got to the highway the weather was freezing cold and the road became slippery like a sheet of ice.. It was very hard to walk. The children were placed on a horse driven cart where our belongings were pilled on. Walking was so difficult that we were sweating in that cold weather. We were thirsty and ate snow on the way. We stopped our walk in Krzeszowice. In the morning we went on to Chrzanow. On the 17th of January 1945, after a three day walk, we arrived to Birkenau. At that time we already knew what was the function of that place. When we arrived, the gas chambers were already blown out.. We had the satisfaction of seeing Germans on the run. After arriving to Birkenau, my father was separated from us. The children remained with me and my mother. There were no selections, it was the end of the war. Men and women were placed in separate areas, divided by a wire fence. I saw my father for the last time across the wire fence. After two nights, we went on the next phase of the march. We were given two loaves of bread and some other food. Then the children were separated from us. My mother and I had great difficulty walking since our shoes were completely damaged and our feet were badly swollen and were hurting. At one of the stops, someone has stolen some of our food. When we arrived on German territory we had some thoughts of escaping, but didn't know where to run. We were surrounded on all sides by the Germans. In addition we were also in the midst of Poles who were also on the death march. Sometimes, they were nasty toward us. I always blamed the Germans for creating a Holocaust in which the good and the bad was all distorted. I maintain that the crime was committed primarily by the Germans. Although the Germans were not in every home, but in every home there were some unfriendly neighbors or an unfriendly janitor. There were good Poles too, but they also worried about their own families and were also afraid of the neighbors. I don't blame Poles who did not take in the Jews because they were worried about their own family. But I do blame the Poles who used to turn in the Jews. After the village of Nowa Wies, we walked for about 3 days and arrived at Loslau (today it is Wlodzislaw) in Silesia. There we were placed in cattle cars. My car was completely open, but at least we didn't have to walk. I remember when we walked we used to see dead men who were shot in some column ahead of us. Most likely these men were walking too slow.

[*Translated by Sam Ponczak 2014]*

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The journey lasted 7 days. One day we woke up covered by snow. We had two loafs of bread each and one or two cans of food, I don't remember exactly. I also don't remember ever leaving the train. We all had the "famous" cans that we emptied at every stop. Finally we arrived at Bergen-Belsen. At that time they were not using gas chambers, only the crematoria; there were no outright killings. We had to disrobe and we were taken naked to the bath. Germans and Ukrainians were surrounding us. They did not consider us human, but we did not consider them human either. We were put into a huge barrack with two large rooms and very small windows high above the floor. There were no bunks, only straw on the floor.

Sicknesses, like typhus and diarrhea were all around. At these huge barracks there were only three toilets. During the day we had to clear a paths to them. These were just big holes in the ground. Some women fell into them and drowned. I knew one of these women. There was no work for us. They did not have to kill us because we died en mass from starvation and sickness. There were Ukrainian women who attacked a warehouse and stole bread and so there was no bread for the others. In the ghetto there was hunger, but nobody starved; people who had money were able to buy some food and share it with others. Here the hunger was inhumane and affected everybody. 8 or 9 women shared a loaf of bread filled with sawdust and some watery soup. I smuggled a pair of boots, which I sold to a woman working in the kitchen who had access to food. She gave me for it a pair of old shoes, 3 loafs of bread, 3 onions and 3 bowls of better soup. A treasure!

My mother had problems with her stomach and she could not eat. Our roles reversed; I, who was pampered by parents as a child, became her caregiver. Amazingly, I depended on her emotionally. When I was temporarily separated from her I cried. I was 17 years old, but I was brave only when she was near me. The situation in the barracks became unbearable. At night, sick women could not reach the latrines and defecated on us.

The Germans asked for volunteers to work. I, and most of the girls that came to Bergen-Belsen with me, volunteered. There were about 500 of us. We were put on cattle train, travelled for 3 or 4 days and arrived in Venusberg, a small town where there was a POW camp for Italians. The Italians were a part of the army that surrendered to the Allies and were later captured by the Germans. They had much better conditions than us. At first it seemed that we made a very good decision. The barracks were clean; there was a factory of airplane engines. We had clean blankets; new bunk beds and the rooms were smaller. The food was also much better; there was soup and other normal food. Unfortunately we brought the typhus with us. There was no medication, it was cold and diarrhea was widespread. It was February or March of 1945. I had to work at the factory. It was a backbreaking work, standing for 12 hours at the borer to drill holes. I had no idea how to do it, but a young man from Italy helped me, because I reminded him of his sister.

The only time we could rest was during the air raids; they would gather us at the first floor and close the doors. We could then talk freely and rest, not being afraid of dying.

Soon the conditions worsened; there was very little food. Mother also worked in the factory, even though she was weak. When my friends offered me much easier job in the kitchen, I offered it to my Mother. This way she was able to bring sometimes an extra potato.

Then I got sick with typhus and I was moved. There was no treatment for typhus; it was just a case of survival of the fittest. Ironically the only good German guard also succumbed to typhus. Mom did not contract typhus but her health was getting worse. I was dreaming of glasses of orangeade with a slice of orange on top. Drink, drink, and drink, that is all I could think of.

Women had to stand for roll call. It was not as bad as at Bergen Belsen and one of my friends sheltered my mom from going to the roll call. She was getting weaker, she had diarrhea and finally was she sent to the same

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place where I was, where the women with typhus were recuperating. I was very upset that they sent her to be with people sick with typhus, but she was unbelievably happy to be with me, and her condition improved. We were able to lie down covered with two blankets to keep warm.

One day, at the end of March, Mom had a nightmare; she was extremely upset and would not tell me what was it about. Later I found out that the same day my father was killed in a stone quarry in Germany. From that day on my Mom's health worsened; she seem to lose her will to live. I, on the other hand, felt better; the crisis was over. I was recovering from the typhus.

In meantime the Russians were getting closer and we were told to leave the camp. I was fighting to get near a window for my Mom in the freight car, so she could get some air. There were about 125 people in each car. The trip lasted 16 days. I was sitting on the floor and for many years my behind was numb. There was practically no food but after 8-10 days we felt no hunger only weakness and dizziness. We were going in circles thru Plzen, Dresden and Leipzig looking for a camp that would let us in. Our train was long, and there were many more trains full of Germans. It is amazing that there was no room for the German trains, but they dragged our train around and around blocking the rails. We were starving, our food had to be prepared at a camp or POW camp but the train did not stop long enough to prepare some food for us. During our travels around and around I saw Dresden and Plzen burning and white, plain caskets piled up at the train stations. The cities were still burning but there were already caskets filled with bodies. At times we were bombarded by the Allied planes; the Germans would run away to hide and leave us in locked cars. Childishly we would wave white kerchiefs at the pilots and we were sure that they would not hit us; they were Americans and British - our friends.

Going back

On April 13th we were hoarded into the train, some walked, some were transported in overcrowded trucks. Our good friends, mother and daughter, were smothered to death by other women, perhaps Ukrainian. The irony of it was that the first man greeting us later in Mauthausen was their husband and father. In our train were women from different camps and some from the Lodz ghetto. Among them were seven pregnant women. One of them gave birth on the train. When the Americans liberated us, they first took care of these women. They were overwhelmed by the new lives on this cemetery. In our car there was no food or water. We drunk water from the locomotive. The Germans warned us that the water is poisoned but did not give us any other water.

I must mention for the record that when our train stopped in the Czech town Klatovy, a group of people brought us food and drinks. It was obviously from several households, because there were huge cans with soup, which was the best I ever tasted in my life. They gave us sugar and asked us to remember that it was from the citizens of Klatovy. We passed Slovakia but nobody came to help us there. The Germans tried to stop the people of Klatovy by saying that we were Jews and it was not legal to help Jews. The Czechs answered that they help anybody in need and if the Germans would need their help, they would receive it as well. One has to realize that it was April of 1945, when the Germans were in retreat and cared about their own skin. To this day I have a sentiment for the Czechs.

I remember when the German officer in charge managed to make some soup for us in a Soviet POW camp. Two of my friends worked in the kitchen and brought us some better soup for my mother. She said that if she could get more of this soup perhaps she would survive.

People often asked us why we did not fight back the Germans. We had seen camps with thousands of Soviet POW's. They were young men trained to fight. Nobody asked them why they did not fight. They did not fight because there was nowhere to hide, nobody to help them. We were also in a similar situation. One fights if there is a chance of survival.

The Germans were running west, we were happy to see them scared. They were afraid of the Russians and tried to get to the American and British side. During the trip my mother's situation worsened drastically. I did not

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want to believe that she was dying. I was telling her that she should look forward to her forthcoming wedding anniversary on May 8th. My parents were married in 1921 by Dr. Osias Thon, a famous progressive rabbi and a congressman from Krakow. Their wedding was a happening. Father was well known in Krakow, an officer in the Polish army. Many of his officer friends attended. I promised mother that the war will end on May 1st and on the 8th she will get a telegram with anniversary wishes from Romek, her son in London. It was April 23rd, 1945. She was in a very critical state but conscious. I helped her to stand up. She started hallucinating and said that she sees our Rozia carrying fruits on a velvety dish. I later told Rozia that mother's dying words were about her. She was our support. As I was tending to mother, some of the women in the crowded car kept beating me on my back; I did not react to it because I did not want to worry mother. These were intelligent Jewish women. They complained that I was caring only about my mother and did not pay attention to anybody else. (*Ziuta is asking for a break, conversation in Hebrew between three persons, but no break.)* Mother was exhausted, she had dysentery, but she only worried about me. Even though there were many friends and acquaintances from Krakow and Plaszow in the car, mother chose a young widow, Hela Goldblatt, and asked me to bring Hela to her. Hela was 24 years old. Her husband, Dr Goldblatt was killed in Plaszow by Dr. Leon Gross, a Jew, who cooperated with the Germans in selecting people to be executed and was convicted and hang in Krakow after the war in 1946.

Mother asked Hela to help me survive. Hela promised and took her promise seriously; she came to the corner where I was and stayed with my dead mother and me. Next morning a "*totes kommando"* (death commando in German) came around and took mother out. I don't know what they did with her body; perhaps they took it to Mauthausen and cremated it there. I will never forget how they dragged mother's body by her legs out of the car, with her head bumping on the floor. As long as mother was alive I wanted to be let out of the car, to straighten out my legs, lie down and drink some water. After mother's death I wanted to be left alone in the car and be rescued with all the others. It was obvious that the war was coming to an end.

Bombardment by the Allies continued. After the war I heard complaints by the Germans and others that the bombardment of Dresden was an unnecessary cruelty. Some Americans and the British apologized for it. For us the war was not finished, we were still suffering and dying. If the Germans let us go at that time, thousands more would have survived. In my opinion, whole of Germany should have been leveled. I never pitied them. I don't want to accuse the Poles, because it was the Germans that created it all. Never mind the restitutions, they were and are the guilty ones. We traveled six more days and arrived at the Mauthausen train station, left the cars and started walking up the hill to the camp. It was late April, the trees and flowers were in full bloom; it was beautiful. On the street there were houses where the SS men and their families lived. Fields of strawberries were in bloom. The camp was for men only. There were Poles, Yugoslavians, Anti-Franco Spaniards and other political prisoners. They were getting Red Cross packages and seeing that we were emaciated, started throwing food to us. By mistake they had thrown a can of industrial grease, which one prisoner ate and got very sick. I was so hungry and numb that I did not feel the hunger anymore.

We were taken down the hill to the sick room where all the doctors from Plaszow were; they came to Mauthausen in August and all survived thanks to the Czech doctors, even the elderly director of Jewish Hospital in Krakow, Dr. Nissenfeld. His chances of survival were nil anywhere else. The barracks were 3 stories high, full of sick, lice infested women. I was crazy on the subject of lice and somehow managed to be free of them. Even now in Israel I see to it that my grandchildren are free of lice. Since most of the doctors and we were from Krakow we had "protection". The healthy women were sent to a Gypsy camp, where all the Gypsies were already exterminated and the conditions very bad. The doctors put us all on the list of much needed nurses in the sick room. I was also on that list. The Germans came and started pushing us out of the barracks. I was ready to go, I lost my will to fight, but Hela forced me to hide in the latrine. As I ran into the latrine some planks gave in and I landed up to my neck in feces. It was terrible, dirty and smelly. Hela was hiding with me and helped in getting out of the hole. We were allowed to stay in Mauthausen. On May 1st a man from Krakow came to our

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barracks screaming; "The war is over, Hitler committed suicide." It was hard to believe it. The last few days we mostly worked removing bodies of the women rapidly dying of typhus and hunger. In the evening we could determine who will be dead next morning and we will have to remove them. We took the bodies out and put them in a pile on discarded mattresses. I was working together with Hela. Even after the Americans came, we had to do the same for a few days. I forgot to tell you that when we first came to Mauthausen, we noticed piles of bodies arranged in several layers like wood sorted for the stove. The crematoria in Mauthausen did not have the capacity to cremate all the dead. These corpses did not look like people. Some people were walking around covered in blanket, looking like skeletons. The Americans kept us in the camp for a while. I think they worried that we will take revenge on the German population. During our imprisonment we frequently discussed how we would do it. "Just to kill them is not enough" was the common agreement. The prisoners killed some of the capos after liberation.

Tape 5 of 6

On the 5th of May the Americans entered Mauthausen. I remember a white tank. This is impossible, but that is what I remember. The Germans who were mostly Volksstrum *(German militia of the last months of WW2 consisting of old men)* had their little cases ready and happily surrendered to the Americans. We were free. Some Poles hanged red and white Polish flags. I was apathetic, could not show my happiness; I felt that for me it came two weeks to late. There was an old prisoner standing guard at the gate. The Americans prepared for us a very greasy soup, and other rich food from the SS storage, which was a mistake. They wanted the best for us, but we were starved for too long and several women died from overeating. I remember when the first Americans entered our barrack they were dressed in white. They were shocked by what they saw. The malnourished and sick women grabbed their hands and kissed them. I did not know what DDT was but learned later that it was a disinfectant, which the Americans spread generously on our bunks and our meager clothing. First they took care of the babies born on the train, then the one born on a bunk below mine, followed by the pregnant women from the Lodz ghetto. I did not yet know that my father was killed and worried how to tell him that mother did not survive, that I did not save her.

The Americans started moving us to the SS barracks in the main camp with clean, with toilets and showers. Hela and I were also moved and assigned to be nurses because we were over typhus. We were strong enough to do it; furthermore the Americans fed us very well. They realized and corrected the mistakes of the first greasy meals. I only wanted to eat simple things, like mashed potatoes. I have learned a lot about nursing, the Americans had the most advanced nursing tools and equipment to fight typhus. The sick with typhus only want to drink, not to eat, but after surviving they would eat voraciously. We washed them, served them water and food. I had typhus in the camp and did not have anything to eat afterwards, but now food was plentiful.

I returned to Krakow at the end of June and my husband Emil found me there. He was also in Mauthausen digging the earth for the underground factories that the Germans planned to build. He was young and strong and survived the hard work. My youngest uncle also survived, but several men from my family perished there. Emil's luck was that a German officer noticed that he was blond, blue eyed and he did not look Jewish. He asked Emil to bring his soup can and filled it with soup. After that he did it every day. Such incidents helped people to survive; for example, Emil's friend, Joseph living now in Australia, swears that he is alive because Emil gave him a sweater. Small things, but they saved lives.

We were free. We agreed that if we survive we would gather at Rozia's. If not for that agreement, I probably would have not come back to Krakow but Hela convinced me to go. My friend Inka, whose mother was my mother’s age and very sick, wanted to take her to Krakow where she could be treated. They got on the first transport to Krakow and her mother did recuperate. Hela and I and went on the second transport. The Americans took us by truck to a train station in Budziejowice on the Czech border. From there we were on our own. It took us forever because of bombed bridges and crowded trains, but we finally arrived in Krakow. Hela's

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mother died not knowing the fate of her father and brothers. Rozia was not home when we came. While we worked for the Americans in Mauthausen, they gave us extra food and 5 cigarettes per day. I saved them and I had about 500 to give to my father, who was addicted to them. We used the cigarettes to pay for a droshky from the train station to Rozia. Her tenant's son, Marian, was home; he was happy to see us, but his greeting was not as warm as Rozia's. When Rozia came home she was happy to see Hela, and me but heartbroken hearing the news that mother did not survive. We stayed with Rozia for two weeks until Hela found out that her father and one of her brothers who were in a camp in Silesia survived and were now in Dzierzoniow, Silesia. The other brother did not survive. Hela left Krakow and went to Silesia to join her father and brother. I stayed with Rozia. My cousin Stella, who wrote a book *Oczami Dziecka" "In the Eyes* of a C*hild" and* the young man I used to date showed up one day. They went to the Jewish Committee to see who survived and found out that I was alive. Joy mixed with grief and hope that my father was alive and will show up any day dominated our meeting. Several people who worked with my father in Plaszow remembered him being in a good shape, sharing food and cigarettes with them and thought he survived but did not know how. I was waiting with any important decisions for father's arrival. A Mr. Kornhouser, a carpenter, one of the people who worked with father and knew what happened to him came to visit his sisters in Krakow, not far from Rozia. It was already August, but he did not contact me. I went to see him. He told me that two young Poles from the Warsaw uprising killed father with stones. He also said the after the liberation he reported the killing to the Americans and they shot the murderers. Kornhouser was the only witness to this, but I think that he did not have any reasons to lie to me. He told me that father had some photos of his family and looked at them all the time. I am sure mother had a premonition of his death on April 23rd, 1945 when she lost the will to live. I was alone.

Going back

Emil was in one of the sub camps of Mauthausen and came to visit me at the sick room where I was working. He asked me to go with him back to Krakow, but I decided not to do it at that time. It was dangerous to travel, because our liberators from the East, the Russians, were robbing and raping. Emil went by himself. On the way home he found out that his father survived somewhere in Silesia and was currently in Krakow. He supported himself by smuggling food from one country to the other. Most important for me now was to make a connection with my brother. I did not know how to try to find him. Hela invited me to come and stay with her in Silesia where she had an important job. I lived with her until October and then came back to Krakow first to Rozia and then to uncle and aunt, the Millers. At that time I enrolled in an Association of Workers University, where I could complete my High School education. I was drunk with my freedom, did not have anybody to push me to pursue higher education.

In February of 1946 I received a letter from my brother and a package a few days later. He was misinformed by Lena, a survivor from Bergen Belsen that all of us survived. Of course, he was very disappointed that it wasn't so, but he was happy that I survived. I continued my accelerated high school studies, I learned typing and other office subjects. Rabbi Salomon Schoenfeld was organizing a group of survivors to visit England and it was taking a very long time. Emil asked me to marry him but I was not in a hurry because I wanted to see my brother first. Emil assured me that he would support the visit to my brother and I promised that I would come back. My brother was severely wounded during his service in the Polish Army, his wound was not properly attended to and he remained an invalid. He married a rich English girl. When I asked her why she married him, a poor student, an invalid, she said that if she would have two years with him she would be happy. Luckily, they were together for many more years. My wedding plans were on and off, but we got married before leaving for England by Rabbi Leventow who worked with me in a machine shop in Plaszow. I did not marry in a civil wedding because my travel documents were issued in my maiden name and I wanted to travel to England. We finally left Gdynia by boat through Goteborg, Sweden to England in late November. In Goteborg some survivors from Poland visited us on the boat and brought us food. The boat was a week late arriving to England because the rabbi could not travel on a Shabbat with the travel documents. My brother was waiting for me in

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London. He got a call that his very pregnant wife went into labor and was taken to the hospital. He decided to be with her. He left a message and address for somebody to put me on a train to Liverpool where he lived. It turned out that it was a false alarm; his son was born a few days later.

I was very excited before coming to London and terribly disappointed when I did not see him waiting for me. On the boat with me were Jewish orphans who spoke only Polish and people waiting for them did not speak Polish. They were British Jews adopting these children or relatives that never saw these children. I busied myself helping them. There was a young Jewish couple at the port that came to see the arriving Jews. For them it was a happening. They offered to take me in for the night and put me on the train to Liverpool. I finally saw my brother the next day at the Liverpool train station. At first I did not recognize him. He grew a mustache. His wife with a big belly was there too. This meeting was very joyous. They lived in a modest rented apartment. His wife was a teacher, but did not work after she had the baby. I was with them for ten months. My husband could not come, because he would not be admitted. My brother begged me not to go back to Poland. In the meantime, Emil, who had relatives in America, received a letter from them, that they would send affidavits for both of us. Emil wrote a letter to my brother that we will go to America or Australia. I decided to go back to Krakow. Soon after my return Poland closed its borders and I was stuck there. Emil was only three years older than I. Neither of us had any trade or profession. Emil saved some money from the time when he was smuggling things between Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary and together with some friends he opened a small factory of rubber products. At that time having an education to obtain a job was not as important in Poland as it is here. He also had some government jobs. We managed to support ourselves.

Our son was born on December 9, 1948. His name here is Rami. In Poland he was Ryszard Zygmunt. He got the name Zygmunt after my father. Ryszard is a whole different story: While we were in the ghetto a young couple, Nordheimer, were our neighbors and they had a 6 months old son Ryszard. During the first deportation from the ghetto the parents were taken away, but the children were left behind. They gave us little Rysio to take care of until they came back. The tragedy of these people was that in their ten years of marriage they could not have a child. The wife, Mila, had some gynecological problems. During the war, in 1941, a doctor told them that the solution to her problems would be to have a child, which was born in late 1941. They lived next door to us. The child was adorable, they named him Ryszard, but everybody called him Rysio. Mila had parents and a sister living about 25 kilometers from Krakow. A week or two later they came and took Rysio with them. He was killed there in the arms of his grandmother. I got very attached to Rysio and promised myself that if I ever have a boy, I would call him Rysio; I kept that promise. My brother's son in England also was named Zygmunt as his middle name. A few weeks after the Nordheimers were taken away we got a postcard from Mr. Nordheimer informing us that he is working very hard cutting trees and that he has seen Mila standing naked in a row with other women. Now it would be obvious that she was waiting to go to her death, but at that time we were wondering what he meant by saying that. This was a proof that people did not know the truth.

This is it. Both my parents were gone. I went to visit my brother in England, came back to Krakow. At first we tried to go to Palestine illegally with the Hagana in 1948, but they did not take us. In 1950 we applied to go to Israel legally. The political situation worsened because Russia was upset that America recognized Israel before them and we were refused the exit papers. The excuse was that my husband was essential in achieving the 5-year plan. This was nonsense, because he did not work for the government, he had his little rubber factory. Only in 1957, under Gomulka's regime we were allowed to go to Israel.

Our beginnings in Israel were very hard. We did not know the language, did not have a profession; the Israeli government did not provide all the help like Ulpan, that immigrants who arrived later got. My husband's father with his second wife (first wife was murdered in the Holocaust) lived in Ramat Gan. He started as a house painter, but at the time of our arrival they had a little kiosk at a corner of two busy streets. He knew that Emil was not inclined to work for somebody, and suggested that he should become a painter, so he would be his own boss, and he will need just a ladder, brushes and paint. This was not such a good idea, because most people did

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their own painting and Emil did have very few customers. Unemployment was very high. I could not find any work. Emil was sent to learn a trade, but was paid only for transportation. Despite of the hard times I remember them with nostalgia. There was no such contrast between very rich and very poor, like it is now. People were friendly, would offer a ride for those walking on the street. Atmosphere was good. Politicians met with people in parks, very informal.

Ziuta lists names of politicians and diplomats she met in an alley behind Emil's father's kiosk where Golda Maier kept court.

I remember my first *Yom Ha'Atzmaut* (Independence Day), how people celebrated and danced all night. We helped Emil's parents at the kiosk all night and Rysio played with other children. Unlike in Poland, where I was very hesitant to let Rysio walk a block by himself and held his hand all the time, here I was not afraid to let him go. Here he was allowed to go by himself. A year later on Independence Day I could not help in the kiosk, because I was busy with Ilana, my daughter. My husband worked as a painter for himself, I would have liked him to change his job, because he had bronchitis and pneumonia but he lost his ambition, lost faith in himself; perhaps because he never learned Hebrew well. We moved to Ramat Gan; the apartment was too small for the four of us and a dog, but we bought it from Emil's parents for a lot of money, which we did not have. We had to get a high mortgage; it took us a while, but we paid it off.

Tape 6 of 6

To be honest, I don't know how to continue this interview. I was supposed to talk about my war experiences, but we are now talking about my life in Israel. We came to Israel with our 8-year-old son. Our daughter was born in Israel. In Poland, we had electricity and water, but I thought that we were too poor to have another child. Here, without water and electricity, we decided to have another child. This decision was the best in our life. Now I am alone, my husband died in 1989 after suffering for three years. Our children have their own children. Seeing them and all the other children gives me a great satisfaction that we, as a nation have survived.

Also, the situation of my little cousins that I was talking about in the beginning had a happy ending. When they were in Ravensbrueck thanks to Prince Bernadotte initiative they were taken to Sweden. We did not know about it at that time. I did not give my aunt, their mother, any hope, because I did not believe that an 8 and 10-year-old children had the slightest chance to survive. But they did. The both had tuberculosis and other sicknesses, but they were cured in Sweden.

The cousin, Bernard, thought that I was angry with them that my parents would have survived if they did not have to take care of him and his sister. This was not true. I saw him for the first time after the war at the Righteous Among Nations ceremony for our Rozia in Yad Vashem. At that time he was 50 years old and a charming man. He is a professor at a university. He didn't know how he learned to read and write, because after the war he was in a sanatorium for almost 3 years. He never went to school. He learned Swedish and still remembers Polish. His older sister is a writer. They live in America with their families. His son is a lawyer. They are very successful.

My children know my life story. I want them to know it and never forget and forgive. The topic of Holocaust was a way of our life. Most of my friends are survivors and at every gathering, no matter the topic, we end up talking about Holocaust.

The parents of my son-in-law survived the war in Russia but the father of my daughter-in-law was in Auschwitz and Mauthausen. Before our first visit I did not know how to behave, but there was no problem, because he was in the same camps as my husband. Instead of talking about the wedding, apartments, children, etc, we talked about the camps. That topic was never taboo in our family. We never forced the subject on our children; it was not something that interfered with our normal life. Ours was a normal home with normal children.

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Ziuta is showing a lot of photos starting with great-grandparents on her mother's side. Photos of the apartment building in Krakow where her family lived, photo of Polish-Jewish veteran officers with her father, photos of her parents from WW1, her father in Austro-Hungarian uniform and a few others. She shows false documents with Polish sounding names. She shows a memoir with photos of her parents from 1919 before they got married. Her father started writing in it at that time. It was a present for him from mother. She also showed her father's officers card. This is all. Thank you. *Some talk in Hebrew.*

This interview was recorded on November 1995 in Israel.

[Tapes 4, 5 and 6 translated by Marcel and Ania Drimer September 13. 2014]

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