

[CROWD CONVERSATIONS] Hello, you.

It's Memorial Day weekend, when we remember not only those who died in our human wars, but all of those whom we have loved and influence on our lives. I remember at this time the wandering carpenter of Nazareth, a refugee in his infancy, persecuted in his maturity. Please allow us to paraphrase the prayer which he [INAUDIBLE].

Creator, Lord, our father and mother, heaven within, life without, [INAUDIBLE] many ways of holding your day is here. Establish your peace as we live your grace. May all people this day share this ample bread.

Forgive us our aggressions, as we forgive aggressors against us. Lead us not to divide here, but deliver us from evil. Make us instruments of love. When the earth falls into the sun, yours be the glory, always going on, now and forever. Amen.

Our hymn is "Turn Back, Turn Back," number 196 in the green hymnbook. Some of you may know this as a musical number in the musical Godspell. But that was not its origin.

[PIANO PLAYING]

[CONGREGATION SINGING]

[CONGREGATION SINGING]

Do we have any announcements this morning?

[INAUDIBLE] like German composers, because they wrote such beautiful music. Since [PERSONAL NAME] playing a Bach piece in the offertory, [INAUDIBLE].

[PIANO PLAYING]

[CHOIR SINGING]

[BACKGROUND NOISES]

Janice MacArthur will greet guests who are with us this morning.

Welcome. Thank you all for coming out on this rainy day and joining us this morning. We usually take this time to ask any visitors or guests if they'd like to stand and introduce themselves. We'd love to meet you, greet you, and find out where you're from. Is there anybody who'd like to be the first? Or if you are a member here and brought a guest that you'd like to introduce, that would be nice, too.

Hi. David [PERSONAL NAME]. My wife Monica, Evan, Claire, and grandchildren [PERSONAL NAME].

Is there anyone else who'd care to introduce themselves? OK. If there are any visitors here for the first time, If you'd like to receive our newsletter, you have a lavender card. which is in the back of the chair in front of you. If you fill it out and leave it on the table in the rear, we'll make sure that you'll be put on our mailing list. Thank you.

At this time for the ongoing work of this church community, our morning offering will be received.

[PIANO PLAYING]

Our speaker this morning is known to many of you. Those who do not know him, you will by the end of this service. It's my very great privilege to turn the service over to Gene Klein.

Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Beside my daughter Monica, son-in-law David, and our grandchildren, my wife Barbara is here, my other daughter, Jill Klein, and her significant other, Andrew. And I'm glad that I see so many familiar faces here. Thank you for coming.

I look around this great hall here and I remember the wonderful times that I had here. And a few-- but that's another story.

[LAUGHTER]

Thursday night at 8 o'clock on the Fox network there's a wonderful show called The Simpsons. I don't know if you're familiar with it or not. But in one episode, Homer, who is the father of this modern American family with all their trials and tribulations, is walking in the clouds with God. And he says God, as long as we are having this wonderful conversation, would you tell me the meaning of life?

And God says, Homer, you got to wait until you die. And Homer said, I can't wait that long. And God says, you can't wait six months?

[LAUGHTER]

So the reason I'm telling you is because our numbers as Holocaust survivors are ending rapidly. And through the urging of my family, I decided after all these years to start speaking about my experiences and what has happened.

I have spoken to a lot of schoolchildren at the Anne Frank exhibit at the JCC. I spoke to hundreds of kids who were bused in just so their teachers thought it was very important they talk to a person who actually survived the Holocaust.

I feel it is important that people know what really happened, no matter how sad it was, no matter what a terrible time. Not only the Jews of Europe, but a lot of other minorities went through to the persecution of Nazi Germany. I got to put down the mic for a minute because I'm going to give you a little geography lesson. It's part of the thing.

You have to picture Czechoslovakia. It goes like this. I'm from right here. Anyhow, the best part of the [? place ?] is Bohemia. You had Sudetenland, itself, the one that was so close to Germany that the Germans felt it belonged to them.

The Eastern part is one of those places that had the misfortune of constantly changing from one country to another. I don't want to go back in history to Attila the Hun because we'll be here till Tuesday. But I'll go back to as far as the Austrian-Hungarian empire.

Then after the First World War, 1918, Czechoslovakia was formed, a wonderful country. Their constitution was based on the United States Constitution. It was a great place to live.

Since then, it was Hungary, Russia, Ukraine, and who knows what else is going to happen there. I always thought it was a wonderful marketing ploy to sell the map of Europe with an eraser because there was such a tremendous amount of changes there that you never knew if you went to sleep one night as a Czech, if you would wind up waking up as something else.

As it happened during World War II, the Germans decided, because the Hungarians wanted to be on their side-- I don't know how they always pick the losers-- but they decided to award this little part of the Carpathian mountain area, including my hometown, to the Hungarians as sort of a reward for being on their side. Things weren't really bad. Life went on.

I'll tell you a little bit about my family and my home life. My father was a merchant. He had a store, housewares, hardware-type operation.

I had two sisters, my mother, and it was a nice, comfortable, middle European Jewish family. Life was very good. As a child, I thought that everything was just Jim Dandy.

Even after the Hungarians took over this part of Czechoslovakia, life continued to be quite normal. Then, of course, as Poland was run over by the Germans, we started getting Polish refugees, some of whom we put up for a night, gave them food, and so on.

We started hearing these terrible stories. Of course, our mentality was, it won't happen here. You know, I mean, our life hasn't changed anything because of the war, even though the Germans, you could see Germans in the city going through Hungary, to the front, and so on, it really didn't affect us.

In the early '40s, things were still pretty normal. Then all of a sudden, actually not so suddenly, but gradually, the anti-Semitism increased. It was really a horrible thing for a young Jewish boy to go to a school assembly and all of a sudden hear the anti-Semitism statements.

You were listening to this thing and you were wondering, what have I done to deserve this? I mean, here I am not bothering anybody. Just because I happened to be born into a family who is Jewish, I'm being picked on.

Things got worse and worse and, of course, a lot of the Hungarians who really became Nazis, there were the so-called Nyilas party who had fashioned themselves after the Nazis, and they started all sorts of vandalism in our hometown, breaking my father's business's windows. I vividly remember waking up one morning to a crash, a rock came flying through our window. I remember my father rushing out to get some plywood to put in front of the windows so we wouldn't get hurt.

Then came the order by the Germans that all Jews have to wear the yellow star. Well, this, of course, singled you out as somebody who is different, somebody who is not as good as anybody else. This type of anti-Semitism increased until one day the order came for all the Jewish families to gather all their belongings that they could carry, which was a little suitcase [INAUDIBLE].

My father's store was inventoried and padlocked. Our house was padlocked. All the Jewish families had to meet at the town square, where we were marched off to sort of a lumber yard. This place, when you have a lumber yard, they usually have roofs on buildings without sides. So in case it rains, the lumber wouldn't get wet. So this was our home for the next couple of weeks during which time the families tried to make things as comfortable as possible.

But the Hungarian guards at this place started periodically to have searches for valuables and jewelry. When you are a kid and you get a gift sometimes, that really has a lot of meaning to you. For my bar mitzvah, I got a watch.

It was a rectangular watch with a black face and gold numbers. It was something really special, because this was sort of my first grown up gift, and it really had a lot of meaning to it. When this was taken away from me, it really bothered me a great deal because this was something that meant so much.

Then the order came for all the families from this lumberyard, which not only included the Jews from our hometown, but the surrounding villages who were rounded up, they were moved over to a brick factory for the simple reason that it was on a railroad siding. We didn't know what the significance was at that time, of course.

Here, all of a sudden, we started seeing SS German officers coming to talk with the Hungarians. Until, in a few days, they decided that this is going to be it. There are a lot of rumors. We heard things like all the Jewish families will be resettled somewhere else, or we're going to the camp yet, or we're going to be working, so on and so forth. Here we were with our meager belongings, maybe a small suitcase for everybody.

One morning the order came for us to march around this train that just pulled into the railroad siding, which was cattle cars. I don't know if you know what a cattle car is. But it's a huge car with very narrow windows on the top, and it had barbed wire on it.

They told us that we have to go around the train. As soon as we turn the corner around the train, the German SS guards told us to put all our belongings down on the ground and get on the car. So they started to count off people by the numbers.

When they came to my father, he was number 82, my mother, 83, one of my sisters, Lily, 84, the sister, Olga, 85. That was it, 85 people to a car. I was number one in the next car. So while we were going from my home town to an unknown destination, I was separated from my family-- I have to find my place here, excuse me.

In this car, 85 people, babies, children, old people, sick people, they're like sardines. There were too small drums in the car. One had water in it and one was for human waste.

The train started. We were on the train for three days and three nights. There was no communication between myself and my family.

We have arrived to this place that we didn't know where we were. Early morning, we heard the German orders, heraus, heraus, out, out. Everybody out.

The doors to the cars opened up. We saw for the first time men with sunken in faces in their blue and white striped uniform, waiting to unload the people. Those who were able to get off got off by themselves.

People died during this time. Sick people died. Children died. People went crazy from thirst.

These people started whispering to the young mothers, give your babies to the grandmothers. Give your babies to the grandmothers. What was the reason for this? We couldn't fathom the significance.

But we found out that the babies who were going with the grandmothers were destined to go to the gas chambers anyway. But if a young mother was holding a baby, the young mother would go with the baby to the gas chamber instead of going to work. So they tried to save as many lives as possible to the young women [INAUDIBLE].

My family and I were reunited for a few moments before the order came for women and men to separate and line up five breast. And we started marching, again, to-- we had absolutely no idea where we were, what we are doing, what's going to happen.

That's the last time that I have seen my mother and two sisters, because they went with the women. My father and I went in another direction. We got to a point where German officers were in their freshly pressed uniforms. Some of them with walking sticks were pointing to people, you to the left, you to the right.

My father, who had a three-day beard, and he was getting a little bit gray at the temples, grew a white beard. So he looked much older than his actual years. I was sent to one side, and he was sent to the other side. Again, no idea what was happening.

So I'm going with this multitude of men to one side. We are marching to these barracks. We are still in line up on this open field when the order comes for everybody to take off their clothing. Here we are standing, maybe 1,000 men and boys, naked, this small bundle of my last connection-- excuse me-- to my previous life on the ground.

Now I'm being herded into a barracks. These people, where my hair is cut off, there are disinfectants being sprayed on us. You're taking a shower and come out dripping wet and getting this blue and white striped pajamas and a hat and wooden shoes and a number.

This worked in rehearsal.

All of a sudden, I didn't have a name. I don't have a family.

All I am is a number.

And I don't know where I am.

I don't know what's going to happen. Here I am in Auschwitz with tens of thousands of others. I'm standing out in the rain with tens of thousands of others.

They're counting us for hours. We are standing for hours. Then the selections come.

People who have been there longer than I keep whispering stand up straight. Stand up straight. Don't look defeated. You stand up straight.

Because the SS is going through pointing to people, you, you, you, you, you. Because they have to make room for the new transports that are coming in. You have to remember, we were the last. The Hungarian Jews were the last to be taken.

These selections are to send more people to the gas chambers. Of course, we don't know about that. I don't know about this.

I spent approximately-- you have to remember this was 49 years ago, so I can't remember everything exactly. About three weeks later, I'm picked out of one of the selections and marched with hundreds and hundreds inmates to a railroad station. I'm shipped out, again, not knowing where we're going.

The trip takes about a day. We arrive at a beautiful mountainous area where I find myself in one of the labor camps that the Germans had established to have these slave laborers work until they die. Later I find out that there's a cluster of these labor camps in the vicinity of where I am. The name of my camp is Wolfsburg.

Our assignment is to build railroad tracks that connects the main railroad station to tunnels in the mountains where the Germans can hide ammunition and food. Even though the handwriting is already on the wall because they are losing on the Eastern Front, they're losing on the Western Front, they still think the war is going to go on indefinitely. Here they have endless supply of slaves to work for them, so why not work them until they die?

So my day consists of getting up at daybreak, being counted, being marched out from the camp, being counted again at the gate, going out to work details. Some of us are working with picks and shovels. Some of us are carrying the railroad ties. Some of us are building the railroads, the metal, the steel things the trains run on, terrible, terrible hard physical labor.

Our rations are unbelievably meager, a slice of bread in the morning with something they call coffee, The German guards are vicious. The kapos that had been chosen from Jews are just as vicious.

We work six days a week from daybreak till dark again. This goes on endlessly, day after day. Slowly, it sinks in that you are in an impossible situation, that unless something superhuman in you will step in, you'll die.

If you won't die from hunger and malnutrition, you'll die from accidents that's a daily occurrence at the work site, or some sort of illness. There's a so-called barrack that's called a hospital barrack. Two angels from Greece, doctors who tried to do anything for the people that they possibly can do, but there's nothing.

They have paper bandages. They have hardly any medication. So they are up against impossible odds.

Days drag on. You tried not to think about what a horrible situation you're in. Inside you there is this tremendous will to go on, to live.

I had this twofold urge. Number one thing was I know my family is probably in the same kind of predicament I am. What can happen if they survive this ordeal and I die? How would they feel about that?

The other thing was I'm not going to let these bastards kill me. I'm going to live.

Two things happen during this summer of 1944. Incidentally, I was taken to Auschwitz the spring of '44. This was a few months later. Two things happened to me that are significant. So I don't-- significant. I don't want to go into a lot of other details, because there's a lot of things to talk about.

One very possibly saved my life and one could have killed me. The first one was one morning while we were standing up being counted, one of the German SS sergeants said what young people here speaks German? Of course, my hand went up immediately. I had two years of gymnasium German.

Gymnasiums were high school in Europe. You were sort of forced in Europe to learn foreign languages because of your proximity to other countries. So if you are fortunate enough to finish your gymnasium, you spoke at least three other languages fluently. Of course, my schooling was interrupted. But I spoke German enough.

I'm marched off to the gate. There is a civilian in a long leather coat, typical Gestapo-looking guy. I told myself what have I done?

Well, the guy takes me outside and says, I'm a civilian engineer attached to this camp. I need somebody to schlep the-- you know that thing with the numbers on it and they do roadwork? He looks through the little instrument that nobody calls it this day. I have to take that stick with the numbers and he tells me where to go, and then he looks and he makes marks in his book.

Well, then here comes a situation where, you know, I really disliked people who have a tendency to group nationalities or races or religions into one lump and say, oh, this is bad, all these people are lazy, all these people are good, et cetera. But here was a German who after about a week of me walking out with him into the beautiful woods, that I actually had moments when I forgot that I was in the camp. I thought maybe I was at boy scout camp going on a hike.

He tells me I see what a terrible, terrible situation this is in the camp. I would love to do something for you. But if the SS finds out that I'm helping you in any way directly, they will punish me where I lose my job over here. What I'm going to do is I have to take you back to this point where you have to join the rest of your group to march back to the camp.

In such and such a room where I'm going to leave you a half hour before time for you to go to the group, I'm going to leave some food for you under this bench. From that moment on, every day there was food. I mean, real food.

There was rice with milk in it. There was meat. It was something that I'd been dreaming of for months. Here it was.

I mean, I can't be 100% sure, but I credit this man with possibly saving my life. Because this was about halfway point, well, maybe, not totally halfway point, in my imprisonment. Making this extra nourishment that I got from this thing gave me enough to physically see the rest of my through.

The other incident came on an early morning when the guard said all the boys-- because they were not just men, there were younger boys who were fortunate enough not to get killed in Auschwitz immediately. They felt they were good enough to work. Lined up by date of birth, and so there was, you know, 26, 27, and so on.

So they started counting off. Just when they get to me, my good buddy is next to me. Because you try, when you don't have any family with you, you try to form relationships to support each other through the terrible ordeals of the camp.

They get to this point, they have 200 kids, and they go. And me and my big mouth, I go to the sergeant and I say I want to go with him. My buddy is going.

The sergeant goes to the Oberscharführer, who is like a captain or something. And he says, this [GERMAN], this prisoner wants to go. And the captain says forget it.

The Germans are very exact. It's not 202, 199. It's 200. That's it. You already have the 200. Go back. So I go back.

The unfortunate thing is these 200 kids have died. They get killed. They wanted to weed out the younger people because what was happening was winter was coming.

Now we have this new fear. The inmates are worried that the things like hunger or illness or accidents that didn't kill you, the cold winter will. So we are really getting very, very worried.

Trucks arrive with clothing from-- I'm smiling at my grandchildren. [INAUDIBLE]. We are finally able to get some clothing from these piles of clothing from people who have been gassed in other camps, and shoes. And finally, on top of our pajamas, we have something else to cover us.

But because they are civilian clothing, we have a big red mark painted on our back so they can see that we are prisoners. But not like they wouldn't recognize that from our faces.

I go out to one of the work details and I scrape my thigh against some rusty barbed wire. It gets infected. I have a hard time walking.

I go to these wonderful Greek doctors, which I didn't really want to do too much. Because being in a hospital in the camp is not a very desirable place, because you're just one step closer to God. They do as much as they can without anesthetics, without any kind of stuff. They cut it open. They drain the wounds.

In the middle of winter by now, they need to get my strength back. Then the order comes that the camp is going to close. A lot of these labor camps will become consolidated into a [INAUDIBLE]. Those who can march through the snow will start out tomorrow morning and march.

You don't know how long it's going to take you. You don't know what's going to happen. Those who are too young, too sick, too late, are going to be trucked. Well, I'm not taking any chances. I'm walking.

I'm walking with all these thousands of people. People are dragging each other. The trucks are following us for a while. People who can't walk any longer, they don't have the strength, falling by the wayside, they're pulling on the trucks. The trucks eventually go in another direction, taking the sick and the lame to be gassed in concentration camps that are here to exterminate.

Finally, we arrive in a large camp. There is a collection of thousands upon thousands of prisoners that were murdered here. There's no labor here anymore.

We know that the war is coming closer, because at night you can see the horizon turning orange. Every once in a while, you hear planes flying over. You hear muffled sounds of guns and bombings. Here we are in this camp, mostly waiting to die. There's nothing to do but wait for death.

I go into the different barracks to see if I can find somebody. I run across a middle-aged man who was a customer of my father in his store. Finally, I find somebody who has something in common with me.

We talk about the good old times. He tells me what a wonderful man my father was, how great he was. He was a customer that was taking letters from a relative who lived in another land to be translated by my father.

I have to tell you a little thing about my father. He was captured when he was in the First World War on the Austrian-Hungarian side and was taken to Russia for four years as a prisoner of war. To do something with his time with the other prisoners, he learned about six languages fluently. So one of his things when he opened his store was that people used to come to him from around the countryside to have letters translated by him from relatives. Meanwhile, they became good customers.

So anyhow, it was so wonderful to find somebody who knew somebody of my family and talk about the old times. This became sort of an everyday occurrence, that I went to see him. He was in quite bad physical shape. It seemed like every day and then I went there, it was getting worse and worse.

Until one day when I went to visit him, just as I got to the steps of his barracks, they were carrying him out. He was dead, with his number crudely painted on his chest. This was another blow to another connection to home that disappeared.

Again, finding some friends who were sort of in my age group, we were the ones who had a little more strength than anybody else. We used to look around and see how we can scrounge some food. We noticed in one area where the guards were dumping garbage that it sort of overflowed.

The camps usually had two rows of barbed wires. One was immediately next to your barracks, then there was a little space, and then there was another barbed wire fence, which in some cases was electrified, like in Auschwitz. In some cases, because they wanted to separate the guards with the guard dogs from the prisoners.

Anyhow it was, they dumped garbage, you know, potato peelings, and things like that. It sort of overflowed to the section between the two barbed wires. We sort of took it upon ourselves that, even though it's extremely dangerous because if they see you from the guard tower, you can get shot if you were to escape, well, we sort of devised some crude instruments to try to reel in some of the potato peelings. Which we were successful, it was wonderful. They put it on the stove to sort of roast it and make a wonderful meal.

One morning a friend of mine and I came out and noticed something very strange. The guards were not in the towers. The guards and the dogs were not walking around the perimeter.

Now this could be good news or bad news. Either they're getting ready to come in here and kill all of us, or they took off. Well, fortunately, they took off.

We didn't know how to handle this until in the distance, we see these two horses coming towards us and a soldier sitting on one of them. This friend of mine, who happens to be Polish, looks out there and says, this is not a German soldier. They have a different color uniform.

As he comes closer and closer, this kid says this guy looks Russian. Well, OK. We think it's better than the Germans.

[LAUGHTER]

So this guy comes to the gate, opens the gate, and this kid starts talking to him in Polish. The guy, to make a long story short, says, you're free. So of course, we run as fast as our physical strength allows. From one day to the next, thousands upon thousands prisoners spill out.

[SIDE CONVERSATIONS]

Anyhow, they spill out food from the barracks. People don't know how to handle the fact that we have been liberated. Before long, Red Cross doctors, volunteers, food arrives.

There is a total riot of people who are dying of hunger trying to get to the food. Those who haven't had any decent food in all these months and years make the mistake of overeating and dying from it. People are starting to line up to get checked by the doctors.

The doctors look at me. They take my temperature. They feel this, they feel that, they say you're going to the hospital. You're suffering from typhoid fever. If we don't take care of it immediately, you're not going to make it.

I go to the hospital tent, or whatever it is, I tell them. Give me my medication. I'm not hanging around here.



[LAUGHTER]

I don't even know where home is. I ask at the railroad station, which way is Czechoslovakia, which way is Carpathians? I know that this train is coming this way with all the Russian soldiers, I should be going down this direction.

So I get on the train. I'm extremely weak. I have some gold with me. It's not really gold, it's a little sack of sugar.

This is something that's unbelievable. I haven't seen sugar. So every time I get to a railroad station, I get off the train. Because every station is doctors, Red Cross people, food, medication. I get replenished a little bit, catch the next train.

Again, I go I still don't know where I am, absolutely no idea. I get to a point-- I'm running really late here, if you get restless, say so.

A young woman in a striped uniform taps me on my shoulder and says I'm so and so. I've been to school with your sisters. I was in the same camp with your sisters and mother, and they're fine. They have been liberated by American soldiers.

It's the first time that I found out that my sister Lily, my sister Olga, and my mother had survived. Of course, we are still a long way from home. Still don't know about my father.

I'm going to try to hurry this up because we have to hear from my daughter Jill. Then I'm going to be back for part two.

[LAUGHTER]

Anyhow, I just want to tell you that I didn't feel right talking about this for a long, long time. But I feel very strongly this type of story has to be told. Because there is some sort of mini-Holocaust going on constantly in this world, whether it's ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina, or the skinheads in Germany burning down buildings with immigrants. There's always another Hitler in the wings, waiting, like, Mr. Duke in Louisiana to get into a place where they can do harm to minorities.

My message to you is that whenever you see hatred or bigotry, and I don't have to tell you Unitarians because you're always on the frontlines of any of these causes, but either collectively to stand up for the right of people when they ask for a specific race or religion. When you go to the polls to support these people or individually, go to a demonstration. Do something.

Now I'd like to introduce my daughter, whom we affectionately call our daughter, Dr. Jill Klein, the professor. She's going to make a short talk. Then she's going to sing a song. Then I will be back with part two. Here she is.

[APPLAUSE]

I used to give speeches up here when I was 12. I still can't quite see over the podium down into the first row. Let me just very quickly finish my dad's story because that way a couple of things that I have to say will make a little more sense.

When he got home, his mom and his two sisters were there. His dad never came home. And they realized later that that happened, that he was killed the first day that they were in Auschwitz.

My aunts, one of my aunts and my father and her new husband escaped a few weeks after they got home from the camps. It was my aunt Lilly's wedding night. My dad heard on the radio that the Russians were taking that part of Czechoslovakia and it would become part of the Soviet Union. He knocked on their window on their wedding night in the middle of the night and said let's go.

They left and went to Austria. They were in a displaced persons camp. The other sister was going to be married.

So his sister Ollie and their mother stayed behind, planning to come later. Of course, there was no later. They couldn't

come out.

So we have my dad's sister, who had her family there in the hometown where my father grew up in the same house, had two daughters. Those daughters then had each had a couple of sons. So I had these first cousins once removed who were about my age or a little bit younger than me.

In the summer of '89, which was before the wall came down in Germany, I went to Hungary and met up with these cousins of mine. We met in Debrecen, where my Aunt Ollie had moved out. Most of the family, by then, had gotten out of Hungary. There was still one cousin and her children that were still in the house in Berehovo, my father's town.

I had always wanted to go to Berehovo. That had always seemed like a dream that would never come true because Americans weren't really allowed to go there. It was near a military installation. It just seemed like an impossibility.

But there was this window of opportunity in just a few months, when things had gotten so lax there that they really weren't paying much attention to who was coming in to visit where, and where we still had relatives in that house. They since all have gotten out to Hungary now. So I got to go to my dad's hometown.

We met up in Debrecen. Five of us piled into this little, little, I mean, little Russian car. We spent eight hours at the Soviet border trying to get across. It wasn't that there were any problems, there were just a lot of people crossing the border.

It was a cold wet night. We had to all turn our engines off, because there wasn't gasoline to keep the cars running for eight hours. Everyone would get out of their cars every five minutes and push, which was an easy job because the cars were so little.

Seeing the people around me, it was real drudgery for them because this was their way of life dealing with this kind of bureaucracy and this kind of inconvenience. To me, it was one of the most wonderful nights I've ever had. I had a cassette with me of American music, and we put it in the car, and rolled down the window and we got out and we were dancing in the streets, the five of us. People in the other cars thought we were crazy.

We got to my dad's house at 3:00 in the morning. We drank a toast to us all being together in that house. The thing that I wanted to do the most in Berehovo was see the soccer field that my father had grown up playing on. He lost all his teammates save one in the Holocaust.

When I was 17, I started playing soccer. My father is a soccer fanatic, as some of you may know, and so was his dad. I was sort of carrying on the lineage. Also, I became a goalkeeper, because that's what my father did. Those of you who know anything about soccer may know that usually people our size are not the goalkeepers.

[LAUGHTER]

But that's what we did. So I really wanted to go and just go to the soccer field where my dad had grown up playing and have my cousins [PERSONAL NAME] and Tommy take some shots on me and just feel what it was like to be there. I didn't realize it, but my cousin's husband knew the coach of the Berehovo men's soccer team. So he had set this all up.

When we got there, the goalkeeper, they were in a scrimmage, and the goalkeeper stepped out of the goal and pointed for me to step in. So this was very, very exciting. It was also very scary, because they were all wearing black warm up suits. They knew who was on which team, but I didn't have a clue.

They were all speaking Russian. They were sort of motioning to me what the score was. And it was great. I didn't do anything to really embarrass myself. So that was nice. But it was the most important thing that I've ever done, to go back there and play there.

There are times when there's such a connection to the past. As a Unitarian, I don't believe in a heaven and that you get somewhere at the end and you get to sit down with everybody. But sometimes there's such a connection to the past, you

feel that window.

I knew my granddad was there, watching us play. OK. So it's a slight twist on the old plot. It was his granddaughter playing which would have surprised him. It was just great to be a part of that life when things were good and the time when things were good for my father.

Then three days later, I was on a train to Auschwitz. I had gone through Poland with my cousin. We stayed with a colleague of mine who was a psychologist at the University of Warsaw. He and I do research on anti-Semitism in Poland together.

The three of us got on the train and we went down to Auschwitz. We toured the camp. We put flowers in the crematorium for my grandfather.

At the end, when we left, we were on our way back to the station. I remembered that I told my dad that I would get some a couple of rocks for him from the camp and that I would bring them back for him. So I told my friends to go on to the station and that I would catch up with them.

So I ran back. I found some rocks. There was some barbed wire there. I contemplated for a second cutting my hand on the barbed wire so that I have this connection to my dad. We both have this scar from there.

Then I realized that that's not what the connection was about and that's not what going back there was about. Because it was about triumph over that kind of horror. It was about surviving. It was about life.

It wasn't about the terror there and the scars that people received there. So I grabbed the rocks, and I ran as fast as I could, the way I knew my father wanted to so many times to just run out of those gates. And I ran and I ran and then met up with my friends.

A lot of people have talked about the second generation survivor syndrome, that we inherit the suffering of our parents, and we inherit their pain, that it can mess us up and cripple us somehow, and all those kinds of things. I have the occasional nightmares and things like that. I've had a nightmare once where my soccer team was lined up against the wall and we were all shot.

But that's a very, very small part of what it is for me to be the daughter of a Holocaust survivor. I mean, look at this role model, and look what I would have to learn from his experience, which is that you can triumph over these things.

I learned from my father about recovery. I learned that bad times, no matter how bad, can be lived through and survived. And I learned from my father that from the darkest of nights, one can emerge to the light of day. I'm very proud to have that as part of my life. I'm very thankful. I'd like to finish by singing you a song that I wrote after my trip to Auschwitz.

[GUITAR PLAYING]

(SINGING)

When the world it was so frightening, full of darkness and doom. Awakened from a nightmare, it was you I would go to. With a joke and a hug, you'd banish my fears, shed light on the nightmares, make them all disappear. There was safety within your arms.

I sat upon the bird's nest, barbed wire filled my sight, imagining what it was to live here and the faces of those who died. When from the midst of horror, a boy appears and sits next to me, so scared and thin, in blue-striped clothes, it's my father at the age of 16.

I said Dad, let's escape. Let's run out those gates. I'll follow. You run ahead. He said those gates are locked and electrified and those guards will shoot us dead.

If you are my daughter I must have survived. I don't die by a Nazi gun. But will I die by the ache in my heart over what my life has become?

This world, it was surprising, full of darkness and doom. Here was my chance to banish his fears, shed light on his nightmare, make it all disappear. And to tell him that life goes on.

In whispers, I spoke, soon you'll wake up to see Russian soldiers at the gate. A beautiful sight you will never forget. You will regain your life that day.

You'll go home to find your sisters and Mom but it never will be the same. Boundaries are changed, and you'll run away, and you'll never go home again.

But your future, it gets much brighter. You'll arrive on the American shore. To the laugh of the lady of liberty, you will start your life once more. And you'll move to where the sky is blue, and the breeze is always warm, and there you'll start a family all happy and safe from harm.

And Dad, I went back to your home again. In your house, I stayed. I walked the streets of your hometown. On your soccer field, I played. I ate walnuts from the walnut tree with the family that stayed behind. There's still so much love inside that house, though so many years have gone by.

His world, it was so frightening, full of darkness and doom. Here was a chance to banish his fears, shed light on his nightmare, make it all disappear, to tell him that life goes on.

So I promise you this darkness will end. The day is coming soon. Please hang on, Dad, you know you got some sweet living left to do

I got one more thing to tell you, Dad, don't you know that I'm so proud that all the forces of evil and hate weren't able to pull you down? In the midst of that gray, dreary day, he vanished from my sight. But I swear as he left, I saw on his face a smile ever so slight.

And I picked up some rocks to remember that day and ran out [INAUDIBLE] Arbeit macht frei. And the prisoner in him and the prisoner in me, on that day we were finally freed.

This world was so frightening, full of darkness and doom. Here was my chance to banish his fear, shed light on the nightmares, make them all disappear, and to tell him that life goes on. To tell him, that life goes on. Tell them that life goes on.

[APPLAUSE]

OK. Now that we got you totally depressed--

[LAUGHTER]

--it's time for us to talk about the celebration of life. I don't know what famous Greek philosopher first said life sucks and then you die.

[LAUGHTER]

I really beg to differ with them, because there are a lot of beautiful things in this life. I'm not meaning to say that life is not difficult. Life is extremely hard.

You get to a point that you think things are getting a little better and a little easier, and all of a sudden you realize you're getting a little bit older. So now you have to make all sorts of adjustments in your lifestyle. Your life is constantly changing.

You start remembering the good old middle age. I'm going to give you a couple of easy examples of let's say, 10, 15 years ago, and how things are now.

Oh, about 10, 15 years ago, you go out with friends to eat dinner. You start talking. You say to your friend, so where are you going on vacation? And they say, well, they're going to go see a guru in Tibet. Then they'll go to the pyramids on camelback, of course.

Then they're going to go down to Kenya on a safari. The rest of the week we are going to Amsterdam for a cigarette.

[LAUGHTER]

And what are you guys going to do?

Well, we are going to SUUSI. For those of you non-believers, sushi is the Unitarian summer camp. It usually takes place in Virginia somewhere on a college campus. Your friends ask you, well, what are you going to do?

So we say well this is our schedule. Five o'clock we have early bird watching hike. Six o'clock daybreak, canoeing. Then you go to have breakfast at the cafeteria.

Then you go to your first workshop. She's going to take zen Buddhism, basket weaving. I'm taking nude massage.

[LAUGHTER]

Then we go to lunch. I got there 8 and 1/2 minutes before the next workshop. Let's go to the dorms and make love. Then you go to your afternoon workshop.

She's taking how to make wonderful vegetarian dinners with Hamburger Helper. You are crowded into a classroom with 27 other men. this classroom is run by a psychologist, a psychiatrist, and a social worker.

All the men in this group have one thing in common. They all eat quiche. [LAUGHTER] we want to find out where we went wrong. After that, they go to the cafeteria, again, of course. Then back to the dorm to get cleaned up, and then they go to the wonderful worship service.

And then directly from worship service you go to serendipity. Now they got two kinds of serendipity. One is for the meek, which is upstairs and you listen to poetry, and talk, and comedy, and you have wonderful instruments being played.

Downstairs is the crazy people. They dance their heart out from 9:00 till 1:00. I got a little secret to share with you. The Unitarians were doing the lambada way before it became popular. Then at one o'clock, the last dance is played and you dance.

Then, of course, you head for the lobby of the dorm where you have a post-serendipity sort of sing along, music, singing, and fun. Finally, about 2:30 in the morning, you're walking towards your door with your loved one. And you gaze into her eyes and say, isn't this wonderful?

This life is great. We can get 2 and 1/2 hours of sleep. And she says speak for yourself. I have a 4:30 AM smocking class.

[LAUGHTER]

Of course, the other thing is, too, remember the good old days when you could go to a Chinese restaurant and say see the combinations here, waiter? I'll have all the even numbers. She's going to have all the odd numbers, then we'll share.

Now you do something like this. Waiter? I'll have the number 13 Chicken Chiang Kai-Shek. Wait. No salt. No MSG. Hold the onions. They give me gas. Hold the mushrooms. They give me a headache. Hold the water chestnuts because I just read in National Enquirer that they give you cancer of the ear lobes.

[LAUGHTER]

In fact, hold the chicken. Just bring me a bowl of white rice and just one chopstick so it will last a little longer. Where do you go to the good old American restaurant where you order like this in the olden days?

Is your meatloaf really greasy? Good. Make me two slices of that, gravy, lot of butter on the buns, and a baked potato, salad.

The food comes. You say, oh, waitress? You see this little corner of the potato, it doesn't have any sour cream on it. Please take it back and correct this terrible mistake. Same restaurant recently.

Bring me a plain chicken breast. Bring me two carrots. Because beta carotene is great for you. Bring me four broccoli. No, make that six, because Bush hates it.

[LAUGHTER]

Bring me a baked potato, plain. But I tell you what, sprinkle a little Metamucil on it.

[LAUGHTER]

As you can see, life goes on. You really don't realize how precious life is until you go through something like a Holocaust, or a very serious illness, or your house crashes down on top of you during a hurricane like Andrew. You have to remember that because life is so hard that you do have to balance it in some fashion with any way that you can.

Because there are so many pleasurable things in life, and so many wonderful things to see and do, whether you go out to the West Coast of Florida to Naples with someone you love and you sit on the beach to watch the sun sink into the Gulf, or you soak in the beauty of the Canadian Rockies, or you stand on a hilltop town in Tuscany and see the endless fields of sunflowers, or you sit in the Rome's stadium watching a soccer game with 70,000 people, most of them Italians, unfortunately, and a few odd Americans.

Or you hear [INAUDIBLE] singing, or you enjoy [PERSONAL NAME] played his magic flute, or you want to watch the Alvin Ailey dancers gyrate their beautiful bodies, or something even much more simple, but just as meaningful. Having your granddaughter come up to you and say, GDaddy, let's dance.

All these are precious moments. And my second and last advice to you is enjoy life. Get as much out of it as you possibly can. Because it's good. And the alternatives really suck.

[LAUGHTER]

It was really a pleasure to have all these wonderful faces here. Thank you for coming.

[APPLAUSE]

I think we need to express ourselves with that same spirit of life, which is in the inside covers of the [INAUDIBLE] hymnbooks.

[PIANO PLAYING]

[CONGREGATION SINGING] Spirit of life, [INAUDIBLE]. Spirit of life, [INAUDIBLE].

[SIDE CONVERSATIONS]

He's such a good boy!

You did great today.

Thank you. Thank you.

No, I bought them.

[KISSES]

[INAUDIBLE].

Found your gum, huh? I thought you would have found that sooner, sweetie. Turn around.

Doesn't he look like Santa Claus [INAUDIBLE]?

[LAUGHTER]

We always joke that my dad is [INAUDIBLE] smile.

Hello, everybody. Good to go.

OK, everybody!

Get a little closer. Just get a little closer, as close as you can.

Oh, no.

I need everybody still looking at us.

We're excited.

Very excited.

Number two is exciting, too.

The only problem is going to be this [INAUDIBLE]. I just can't get away from this guy, you know? That happens, too.

Things aren't working [INAUDIBLE].

This guy has been on your stomach all day.

Is she doing this on her own, or--