

Marsha Segall, Reel 3.

The chief of police was somebody we knew very well. And he wanted to be an example. And it's difficult to believe that he really believed what the Germans told him. And he took his little girl, which was a beautiful little girl, blonde with curly hair, lovely. And on his arms, he brought her to the lorry and gave her to the Germans.

And he wanted everybody to do the same. Either he was insane at that time or something, nobody knows. But he thought that they're really going to a children's home. It's unbelievable.

Did you find out later what happened to the children?

Yes. Well, first of all, when we saw that they shot a child, when he jumped from the lorry, that was the indication that they're not going to a home. Secondly, by this time, we more or less knew that anybody who is taken out from the ghetto is not going to something nice because we never saw them again, we never heard from them. And we started to believe that they are being killed. We didn't know how or where, but we didn't believe anymore their stories.

And especially when they took our young children. What are they going to do with babies? And I don't also have to tell you the state of the mothers. And the mothers who came back in the evening from work and found the children have gone. It was-- the crying and the screaming was so terrible that it was impossible to be there. And one, who didn't have anybody with children, we just couldn't take it. And we had already contacted a Lithuanian peasant who was willing to hide us and help us and perhaps even to contact partisans, which in '43 already started to exist in Lithuanian forests.

How would you contact the--

Well, we didn't actually. We went to the wrong part of Lithuania. There weren't-- but we didn't know exactly where they were. The partisans have been in Vilnius and around Vilnius. And today, I know quite a few who have been there, some who have had a lot in common after the war crossing borders to Italy and who lost arms and who fought a long time. But where we went, we didn't encounter.

But we had this contact. And we decided that we cannot take any longer, that we have to leave because it was impossible. And I also felt that by leaving we would make some sort of way and a hideout for Mommy and my sister.

Who was going to leave the ghetto?

I did. And--

Alone?

No, with my husband.

By this time you were married.

Yes. Well, it was sort of a commission made in the ghetto, like a civil marriage, because there was-- you couldn't marry a rabbi because it didn't exist. They've been taken in the beginning. My daddy was taken--

Had you--

Pardon?

Had you met your husband in the ghetto?

Yes.

Did you go out to work from the ghetto before you were planning to leave?

No. My husband did. I worked the whole time in the Arbeitsamt, which is the work force division of the Judenrat.

What were you doing?

I was just a secretary. We used to get the requests from the German authorities. We had to discuss it with our elders, who to send, because we used to send the right people to the right places. If it was heavy work, we used to send younger people, able. If it was something easy and they could get food or something, we used to send younger children or older people.

Where would they be working, in the town or--

No. No. In the beginning, it was one building outside the barbed wire. And actually, it was very beneficial because it was outside the barbed wire. You didn't have to get into the gate of the ghetto. Any outside contacts that we had to make with Lithuanians or if we had news from somebody, they used to come to this particular house.

Did your Judenrat have to provide labor for the Germans to go to Germany?

No, not to Germany, in Siauliai. And also afterwards, they took-- they amalgamated both ghettos in one. And of course, they couldn't fit in. So they took some more housing from Lithuanians who lived right next to us. And they also sent out quite a lot of people to outside camps when there had been a lot of peat around, to digging peat. And it was quite a lot of camps outside Siauliai, but within reach.

How did the inmates of the ghetto, the people who lived in the ghetto, feel about the Judenrat? How did they feel about the Judenrat?

Oh, they'd be very grateful to them because they did everything possible to help. If somebody was in jail or somebody was caught in a raid before the gate, they already negotiated right away on the spot. And it was-- lots of police, [NON-ENGLISH], was bribed with very lavish gifts.

I asked the question because in a lot of ghettos, the Judenrat became very unpopular.

Oh, yeah. To us, if you would read the book, which is a diary of everyday life in the ghetto, you see that they are absolutely admired. They're like heroes because whatever they decided, the Germans, to punish and to take out people and they wanted three or four, they always used to present themselves. And every day, they used to go out in the morning to have a discussion with the [NON-ENGLISH] commissar and to plead for people's life and to let them out from jail and to abolish certain laws. No, no, they are like heroes in our mind.

Was there a curfew imposed in the ghetto?

Yes. Well, it was a curfew because of the war. Because in the evening, it was very strict that it should be-- the windows should be covered, no light. And we could only read till I think 8 o'clock, something. Not in the beginning, in the beginning it was free. But when the war started going the other way, it was strict. Altogether at the end, where we've been taken over by Gestapo, I haven't been at the changing period because we've been in the village.

Can you tell me now about the escape, yourself and your husband, made from the ghetto.

Well, my husband and I, we had the contact with the Lithuanians. Actually, they came to the ghetto. And we told them that-- they told us that we should come in a house which was not far away of a Lithuanian family, which lived in Siauliai. And they had the peasant who they knew who was willing to come with cart and horses to take us to this place. It wasn't near. It was completely a different part of Lithuania.

And we went to the leather factory, which was part of it. It was almost on the street. It wasn't inside. It was the fur

department. And it was somebody who was a specialist, who was Jewish, ran it. And we came to him. And from there, you could get out to the streets. Generally, very often, to be able to change food and also when I went to see our manager, which was working for somebody else, and she had for me made things of food or something. I used to take off the stars, dressed very properly and go out in town.

I went out also once with a friend who saved a child. When he was born, she took him to a Lithuanian family. And I went with her also without stars, dressed properly, with very nice hats. And I mean you could do it. You couldn't do it for long, but you could.

And when we came to this place of the fur section, we had a little case. And we took off the stars. And we went to the Lithuanian family. We spent the night.

And next morning, the peasant Laureckas came to fetch us. He did it-- perhaps he was a good man because in a way, he was-- a big slice of his life he spent in Detroit, in the United States. And he came back to Lithuania when he heard Lithuania got independence in 1918. And also, he expected after the war to be rewarded, to be paid for it. And, of course, we told him that we got family in Rhodesia and so on.

We knew Jews and quite a few in small places around the village was. But they have been all killed right in the beginning. So it was a long time that they didn't see a Jew at all. And it wasn't a village that they all lived together. It was scattered houses in the forest. Lithuania is covered with forest, which goes as far as Sweden. And we couldn't imagine that anybody could find us ever there because it was so secluded.

But yet, the peasants used to come and visit him. And we had a special hideout made in the barn. And then they started to order him to dig a hideout in a room under a cupboard in the house, in the ground. What they tried to do is to make an escape route if the house should be raided to be able to get out. They didn't manage to do it and they've been found before it. It was half till the foundation that it wasn't ready.

We traveled with him with horse and cart for nearly a whole day. And when we came there, it was a family of his wife and two daughters and two sons, the younger ones. The sons were young. One was just about six, eight.

Approximately what month would this be? What month would it be in 1943?

In November, right after the children were taken out. But our main reason of staying there was to be able to make an escape route for my mother and sister because Mummy was afraid to get out or to do anything. She was very spoilt in life, and everything was done for her. And my sister was young.

How old was she then?

She was a teenager. I mean she was over the age of 12. But when she entered the ghetto, she was about 12 then. And actually, that was the reason we've been found and denounced. Two reasons, one, it was suspicious because the older daughter who didn't normally go to the next little towns, [NON-ENGLISH], once a year, all of a sudden started to travel to town. She never traveled by train before.

Why was she going?

She was going to see my mother and my sister. And she used to bring letters. And we gave them instructions. And she also brought money and medicine, which we needed. One village, it was impossible to get in the village because I got very ill. And that was a calamity because I couldn't be in the hideout in the barn. I had to be in the room. And that how they found us.

And also, Christmas, Laureckas' wife decided that she is going to invite her sister, which was the biggest mistake ever. We tried to talk her out of it. But we weren't in a position to do so.

And the sister was very jealous of my personal things. She liked my shoes. She liked my dresses. And Laureckas' his

wife wouldn't give her anything. She told her--

Had you given these to Laureckas' wife?

Well, it was there. And she promised her the shoes-- I had new shoes made-- and that she will have it in spring, that these are in exchange for you. And we think that she was the one who denounced it because it was about a week or 10 days after Christmas when the Laureckas went to the next little town to sell some food products. And she walked in shouting, oh, Jesus, the house is surrounded.

And they found me also in a very bad time because after Christmas I had a terrible cold, my chest. It was from a sauna because they had a sauna in winter just before Christmas, once a year. And it was almost in the open. They took the ice from a little lake and putting it on heated stones, which they had heated for a day.

And I had very high temperature. So I would be in a room in the bed. And actually, I slept in the bed. They wouldn't have found us in the hideout.

But when they walked in the room. It was obvious that somebody was there just now because the bed was not made. It was like if somebody slept in it. There was money on the table because the daughter, Kozuzia, just came back from Siauliai, and some ring that John made out of silver. And the windows have been shut, and it was dark.

So they knew that we are there. And they knew that they have to find us if they look properly everywhere. And they did. They looked in the cupboard. They found something loose. And they had a look at the [INAUDIBLE] entrance.

It was just unfortunate that it was the same day that Kozuzia came back, and I was ill. Yes, it was also medicine on the table. And would one policeman arrive, we could have made a deal. But there were three of them with letter. Because to hunt Jews at that time wasn't popular anymore because it was after Stalingrad.

And in Europe, the front-- I know exactly how the war went because I used to read a newspaper. They have been illiterate. And I used to read it. Anyway, I wanted it to be the Allied advance quicker than the newspaper said because we had to give them some reason to keep us.

And actually, the Russians were advancing. And the Germans were shortening the front. That's what they used to write. They're shortening the front for defense, for better defense. And the Allied were fighting in Monte Cassino in Italy.

And so it was to them, they saw that the war for the Germans goes the wrong way. They didn't they really didn't want to kill Jews or anything, to have their name back in front. But there have been three of them, so it was very difficult to bribe all three.

We were taken during the night to a small town, where there was a small police station and a cell. And we believe, because we know that he was in jail, that Laureckas, when he came back, he was arrested and put in jail. But he was a short time, and they let him out.

And when we came in the little town, we were told that we were going to be shot. They told us even the time, 4 o'clock in the morning. And I now understand what it means to be condemned to death. But 4 o'clock passed. And 5 o'clock passed. And 6 o'clock passed. And nobody came.

Were you put in a cell together?

In a cell together because there wasn't a proper jail. And the funniest part was that all Lithuanians came to look at us. And they brought us food. We had pounds and pounds of butter and all sorts of things. It was all piled up.

And I remember the police chief's wife came. And she said, we should die very bravely because the Russians are here, and our lives will be avenged. It didn't help--

How did you feel?

It didn't help. I asked her for poison. And John didn't. He was more optimistic than I. I didn't want to find us alive.

And then they send us to a bigger district town because nobody wanted to shoot us. They didn't. They didn't want to do it anymore. And they had no reward. I mean we had nothing. I mean they couldn't loot us because that was the main reason that they did it in the beginning.

So they couldn't find anyone in the town who would actually execute you?

No. And they sent us to another, a bigger town, a district town, [PLACE NAME]. And there, I was put with women, women separated, and John with men. And the women were very decent. And to me, it was very funny to meet a woman, which I heard about her case before, because the peasants told us about a murder case, that an old peasant's wife, young one, with a farmhand killed the husband.

She was extremely nice, by the way. I had all my hair knotted. And I had them long because I had them in place. And she tried to comb it through.

And we had to go to a transport to the main jail in Siauliai. And when it came to it, we have been taken just John, myself, and two Gypsies, a father and son, and two armed police. And we've been taken on a train.

That was what a very funny story because Laureckas told us once before about a dream, because peasants in Lithuania believe terribly in dreams, because every day they came with some story. And he told us that he saw in his dream two people that he knows very well, but he couldn't make out who they-- they were Jews, but he couldn't recognize them-- and two Gypsies at the railway station.

It's true. He told us that about a week before. And then we found ourselves with two Gypsies. The first thing we thought is about Laureckas' dream may sound funny, but it really happened.

And we had trouble in the train. We had jewelry in our coats, in the padding. And that we had to get rid of.

Why?

Because we were not supposed to have anything. We had to deliver everything to the Germans.

What did he do with the jewelry?

We pretended it's cold. And we hugged each other. And we took out from each other's coat. Then John said that he has to go to the toilet. And one of the guards, policemen, went with him.

But he didn't go inside, and he dropped it-- it was double windows. It's always double windows in our climate. And he dropped it. And he memorized the number of the train code, which is human nature. I mean it was silliest thing when you think now because in one way we were going to die, and the other he memorized the number of the carriage.

So he could retrieve the jewelry.

That's right. It seems now like a joke. And they brought us to Siauliai. And here again, you'll see what Judenrat really was because although they didn't have at that time any big power at all, that is a part we missed being in the village. That it changed.

The Gestapo took over the ghetto. And they semi-dismissed the Judenrat. I mean they had no say. And they put a stooge of their own. He was Jewish. His wife was from a very high birth German family from Memelgebiet, from Klaipeda.

And they promised him freedom eventually if he takes the ghetto in his reins. And it was a reign of terror. But we didn't

know about it.

And yet, the Judenrat did help us a lot because going to the jail-- the jail was overlooking the ghetto. It was right next to it. From the windows, you could see the ghetto.

And so everybody, the columns, who came back from work or who went to work-- I don't remember what way it was-- they saw us being brought. So they knew that we are in jail because we couldn't communicate it.

And then it started-- they did everything possible to save us because the ghetto wasn't a very cheerful place to be either, but the jail was death, earlier or later. But nobody came out alive from there unless you took them out. Because the first thing we heard is we heard that they knew, and they're doing everything. So we had the prison priest contact us both.

Also told us individually because we were separated, it was a women's part and the men, told us exactly if you'd been interrogated what to say, not to contradict each other. When I think now, I mean our crime was that we left the ghetto. So I don't know what they told us to say to the Gestapo because usually the Gestapo is to interrogate.

--because it's not here.

Is there a trick?

[AUDIO OUT]

Marsha Segall, Reel 4.

When they brought me to jail, I was separated from John. And the first day was absolutely terrible because they put me to a single cell, which had no lights, nothing. And they put with me a woman who was crazy. She was mad. And she was going at my throat the whole time. And I never knew where she was coming. Because it was dark, I couldn't see her.

And this was a cell which they used to put people before execution. And it was all sorts of scribblings on the wall, which was frightening. I only could see what was written when the warden used to come because I used to bang the door. I was scared of the crazy woman. So she used to come, switch on the lights.

And then it all gazed at me, all inscriptions. You know, it's my last day. And she said nothing she can do. I have to be with her to the morning and try to sit in the corner so that she shouldn't come from the back. I don't know who she was or what she did.

But next day, I was taken out and put-- they didn't change our clothes. I mean we didn't have prison clothes. But they took away my little things that I had.

And they put me in a cell with Lithuanians because there wasn't a special jail for Jews. And we been quite a lot in a cell, all sorts of-- some for murder, some petty thieves. But they all had a sentence. And I was terribly jealous of them because in my case, every minute of the day, the door could open and they could take me out and shoot me.

And then one day, the warden came. No, in the meantime, before then, the priest came in. And I spoke to him. He spoke to me actually. And he told me he spoke to John. And he spoke to my mother and that they are trying very hard to take us out from jail. They're trying all sorts of ways and means. And he told me that I should say that I couldn't bear being in the ghetto and that we just-- not that we tried to help my mother and sister, but just individually we ran away. And he will contact us again if necessary.

A few days later, I was called, my name, from the cell, and told me to put on my coat. And I went down. And there was John with two guards, police with guns. We've been taken by foot to the Gestapo headquarters.

It was snowing. It was winter. And it was dark. And we came late. It was about 6 o'clock, something like this, in the

evening. That was our luck.

Because I have seen interrogated people from Gestapo, I didn't have a row-- face and their body, I mean it was all blue and black. And they had special torture rooms there. But first, Dr. Charlin, and the chief of the Gestapo spoke to us, first to me. And he asked me all sorts of questions, which I don't even remember what it was, but nothing of importance.

And then he called John. John must have said something differently because he started shouting, who is lying your wife or you? And then he wanted to take us down to the cellar. And secretary came, Bavaria with white socks, I remember exactly, her hair up, brushed. And she said, aren't you coming? The potato pancakes are ready, and they're getting cold.

He called the guard. And he said, take them back. And he went to have his dinner. So we were really lucky. And they never called us again.

And after that, with John's connections, because through the warden, which he did for them all sorts of repairs and things and jewelry, watches, whatever they needed, he lived very near the ghetto, his mother-in-law. So he had all sorts of messages from the ghetto.

Through the warden?

Through the warden. And also, he influenced-- in the women's jail, there was a workshop. I mean they repaired German army garments. The ones who had been shot at from bullets, wounds. They used to have big washers. They used to wash it and then mend it-- underwear and uniforms.

And the one in charge, her bookkeeping was very bad. And also, she couldn't speak German. So she knew from the warden that I can do it. And I was transferred to a different cell with the workers, which was much better conditions. It was not the bunks. But it was beds. And it was much cleaner and not so crowded.

And in the beginning, she gave me to mend. But I couldn't. I wasn't very good at it. And then I took over her whole bookkeeping. And I used to receive all the garments. And I used to deliver it. And the Germans used to come with accounts, how many there are and what it is.

And that improved my conditions very much because-- although they used to make all sorts of jokes about Jews, but they didn't mean me personally. A lot of women have been illiterate. And I used to read their letters and write for them letters home. And because of that, I was exempt from washing the cell because we had the rotation. They used to do it for me.

When were you finally released from the prison?

Yes, not released. We had been bought out. They didn't release from the prison. There have been in my cell was another Jewish girl, which was interesting because she was saved by a guard from outside who guarded with a machine gun the whole jail because she used to stay at the window and he fell in love with her.

And my son, the rest which I knew, were in different cells have been executed. We went out after quite a-- I think 105 days. John knows it exactly how long we've been there. We've been there February, March, April, May. Because May I remember very clearly because May are lots of people in jail, used to sing the songs of Maria, because it's the month of Maria, May.

So now May 1944.

May 1944. And we used to stand at the window because the others you could see, in the other cells. The windows were small, right on top. But the workers room was over the workshops. And it was very near the wall and the towers, the watchtowers.

But he used to pretend he doesn't see. And if people came to the ghetto to the house which faced it, talking like deaf and

dumb, with fingers--

Sign language.

--sign language, we could understand. I used to see Mommy. I used to see my sister. I used to see friends who used to come and talk to us.

And we've been told that they're hoping. I saw Mommy very often in distress and crying. But it's nothing any of us could do.

What happened in the end? What--

We didn't know what happened. We knew that one day very rudely, they came in and said, take your coat-- or you don't need your coat anymore. You're going out. We're taking you out of the cell. And I came in front and John was there. And they opened one gate and another gate and a third gate. And they took us out from the jail to the ghetto.

But then I knew from Mommy how it happened is that she was introduced and it was made for her possible through somebody who was an engineer and very important to the leather works, which was next to the ghetto and lots of people worked, to the chief, to the manager, the German manager. And Mommy gave him a very valuable bracelet.

And he still mentioned that he hadn't seen anything so beautiful, that his wife was would wear it even. But he made a deal with the chief of Gestapo that as he was going on holiday to Berlin, he will take for the chief of Gestapo's wife a leather jacket and boots. And for this favor, he will let us out from the jail to the ghetto.

I mean he didn't take much chance. He let us out from jail, which perhaps would have been death, but to another one. I mean not in the freedom.

We have been terribly restricted when we came to the ghetto. And we couldn't do anything because I would have run again. But we've been checked every evening if we are there.

We were not allowed to go to work outside. I was painting clay pots, pottery, to make it with all sorts of designs and lacquer. And it was taken to the hotels, which Germans lived. John was also working in the ghetto. And it was such a short period from there to the time they took us to the concentration camp that there was no way of escape.

It started in July. It started-- it was the Russians advanced. And they have been about 15 kilometers from our town. And it was very heavy bombardment. And a lot of it fell in the ghetto because they tried to bombard the leather works, some other factories, which were right next to it.

And they didn't bomb very accurately. We had a lot of bombs in the ghetto and actually injured very badly the man who was the top of the Judenrat, who was a wonderful person. His whole family actually, his brother, his other brother was shell shocked. And when they build a makeshift hospital, and when they evacuated the ghetto, they shot them because they have been very badly injured. And the whole family actually there didn't survive, neither their wives nor their children.

Was the ghetto completely evacuated?

Forcefully, yes. Some went earlier because they didn't have trains. In Siauliai, they didn't have trains. They didn't have even railway lines anymore because it was bombed. They left everything, German supplies, everything.

But they found trains about 12 or 15 kilometers outside. And it was a struggle because before the last bombardment when our heads, the previous heads have been so badly hit, they tried to make a deal with Lithuanians that they should not find any trains. But the one stooge who was in charge of the ghetto, he tried very hard to get it because they promised him freedom in Germany and to his family.



Well, eventually, he won because the Gestapo also wanted to take us to Germany. That was already their policy, which not to leave anybody behind. Individual people managed to escape. And they have been really liberated in a few days. But the bulk was taken to another place. And we slept one night in the barns.

Were you marched to the--

Yes. Actually, it was the last time I've seen my hometown, I seen our building, everything where we lived before because we had to cross the whole town. It was early morning. And then it was cattle trucks, a whole train. And I believe people who had some luggage, the luggage was taken to one carriage because they knew that they will never give it to the people.

We had nothing, because John and I, whatever we had we threw out. We couldn't organize anything. We couldn't get out anymore. So we have been actually the only people who didn't have food, who didn't have luggage, who didn't have anything. And we didn't--

Were you still with mother and your sister?

Yes. We didn't know-- and also with John's cousin, which lost a child in the ghetto. They took away his child, and his wife and her sister and her two children. And we've been crowded, but not in the extent that you couldn't breathe.

You could breathe. And you could sit. And there was two Gestapo soldiers sitting in-- a little bit open was for air. And they were sitting in the front with machine guns in every carriage.

What were the sanitation arrangements?

I don't think there was sanitation. You know, it was such a horrific experience, the whole-- that I-- it was everything so quickly organized. And then we didn't travel very long. Because if you'll see on the map, to Stutthof, to Danzig, or Gdansk, as you call it now, it's very near. It's just a bit of Prussia.

In one station when we came, I think it was water and it was bucket or something for sanitation. I mean like in the jail, it's the same thing. And it was a bombardment. That's what always worries me because saying that they couldn't reach Auschwitz because in Prussia, which is much further, it's almost on the border of Lithuania.

When our train came there, the Gestapo locked us. And they hid. The took cover because it was a bombardment.

And I always think that human beings do things sometimes instinctively. Everybody who took off shoes, put on the shoes again, ready to run. And we couldn't get out.

And then we've been brought to a place, an open place. We're told to get out, still not shouting, and more or less normal or orderly command. And there was a narrow gauge train, an open one. And that was the train, which went to Stutthof.

We arrived at the gate of the concentration camp, which the normal slogan that work makes free. And I know it in German. It's very difficult to translate. It's not actually-- it was Arbeit macht das leben suss [NON-ENGLISH].

And then it was a confusion because we saw inmates. We saw people with striped suits with red, pink, and green triangles, looking terrible. And we really didn't know what's happening to us. It was like a shock because we didn't know where we were going to be taken.

The only indication, the only time that we heard the word concentration camp, which is in short in German, [NON-ENGLISH], was that our train stopped in the middle of nowhere opposite another train with young Hitler Youth, children. Being summer, July, they must have been taken to the seaside on holiday, I presume, because it was a full train of young children.

And when the doors were-- our doors were open, they began chanting, [NON-ENGLISH], it means Jews are being taken

to a [NON-ENGLISH], which is a concentration camp in short. I mean they knew. We didn't.

And also, even if we knew, we didn't know what to expect. We had no idea. We never met anybody who had been there. And we never knew they existed.

What date was it when you arrived at the camp?

We arrived on the 20th of July 1944. It was a significant day. Perhaps it was the 21st. I'm not quite sure because they knew already there was a British prisoner of war.

Where? At the camp?

Not at the camp. They've been at the railway station. I don't know whether there was a prisoner of war camp near there. They haven't been in the concentration-- or they have, I don't know. But they have been at the platform near the train.

And they told us, you came in a good day because he's dead. So it may be that it was the 21st. But it was more or less the day when they tried to kill Hitler, the German officer. But he wasn't dead, as you know.

And then the Stutthof, we've been put on like a clearing and told to put to-- everybody to put their cases or whatever they had to leave it. He even told that whoever has got food, they can eat it because that will be the last time they'll be able to touch it.

Who was telling you this?

The commandant. He told us that he is the commandant of the camp. And that it's Stutthof. And it was again a bombardment of Danzig. And the sky was lit. And then he told us that we shouldn't be very happy because there is gas chambers and there are crematorium.

What was the reaction to this information?

No reaction because we've been like dumb. I mean you don't have feelings at all because we've been-- I mean it was such a shock, the whole Stutthof. But I don't think you have feelings. You don't what you feel.

Is this the first time you'd heard about gas chambers and mass killings?

We didn't hear about it at all. I mean, everything was a shock, the whole surrounding, the barbed wire. He told us the barbed wires are electrified with high voltage. And it's the best way to commit suicide if you go near it. And I mean the whole bombardment and he's shouting, and the funny noises, which came from barracks and at night-- and also, it was a funny smell.

Why?

I think charred bodies. Or I mean what a terrible funny smell and all mixed with the smell of the sea because we were terribly near the sea. It was-- the soil was sand.

How was your mother and your sister?

We've been all together. But nobody spoke. I mean it was as if you lost the speech because I think everybody went through a terrible shock.

What happened after the commandant's talk?

Well, we had SS guard, surrounded by SS guard. And funnily, enough they've been Lithuanians. And they took us through many barracks, which have been divided with barbed wire, to the last one. And they just opened the gate, and

they let us in.

And I remember clearly one thing, that somebody, a voice, which I recognize, came to me. And she gave me a rolled, like a cigarette from wood. It wasn't tobacco. It was wood. And she says, have it and it will soothe your nerves because I'm here already a week. And it was a very good friend of mine from Kaunas. They arrived before.

What had she given you?

Something to smoke. But it was wood, you know, rolled in paper.

Did it calm your nerves?

I don't know. It was-- and then we were given numbers. But in only Auschwitz was tattooed. The rest they-- I don't know whether you know it. You don't use it anymore. But it used to be chemical pencils. But if you made wet, it used to write down.

And your number was?

And they put it on the arm, the number. My number was 54,260.

And does the number remain?

No. No. But we've been so afraid that it will go down that one girl had a tiny little pencil. She managed to go through. I forgot to tell you that before we've been brought to-- which is very important-- before we were brought to this barracks, we were brought to a brick building. And they told us that it's showers, that we're going to take a shower after our journey.

So we had to undress and to go through the-- before we went to the shower, we've been completely searched if we don't have anything taken through. Well, I know now that they looked for jewelry or things like that if people swallowed or did-- and after that we've been just rushed in into a square, which had nothing, only had like little pipes, like hats of showers. But there was no water, nothing coming from it. And there was no soap, no water, no towels, nothing.

And we just been shouted to go in quickly and the same way shouted to get out immediately. So it wasn't a shower. But we knew afterwards that it was the gas chamber. But they didn't gas able people who could work because they needed everybody. They had no labor. And at that time they needed labor.

And we've been-- from the other side, they were thrown to us-- because our clothing was left out in the beginning because they used to search it. They used to X-ray it for jewelry, for all sorts of things. And on the other side, we've been thrown a dress, no underwear, no bra, nothing, just a dress and shoes.

I mean you also been lucky if you got shoes which fit because they didn't put you down to look for your right size. And that was very important. Some people who got right shoes, it was very important later on with marching and walking. Some got rotten.

Marsha, given that the only piece of clothing you had was a dress, did the SS make any arrangements for you for sanitary use when you were menstruating?

No, none at all. Actually, when we came out, we had this funny dresses on, we really didn't look ourselves anymore because we looked funny. Usually, they threw to tall ones short and to short ones long. And we looked odd.

That was very, very depressing. And it was degrading. We really didn't feel any more like human beings. And it also killed any will to live or resistance. And, no, they provided us with nothing.