

Holocaust Survivor

Oral Histories

RUTH KENT

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Can you tell me your name please, and where you are from?

My name is Ruth Kent, my maiden name is Weintraub, and I was born in Łódź, Poland.

Tell me a little about your family and your life in Łódź before the war.

Uh, my father died a year before the war broke out in 1938, and my parents owned a bakery -- my mother took over the business, and she had um, we were four children and she adopted two so actually there were six children she had to support. But uh, she worked very hard and we had a uh lovely home in a very nice neighborhood and uh she made sure we are not missing anything. And we would uh, summertimes she would send us on vacations and she would also uh, have uh, different relatives' weddings at our house that were poor and couldn't afford it. And my mother was very generous, so was my father. They would support the local synagogues. And uh, she was also very cultural, she had tickets to the opera, season tickets, and the uh theater. So I remember my uh life before the war as being very beautiful life. It was a very big family and uh extremely dedicated one. Very close knit family.

How many people in the family?, first cousins, aunts, uncles...?

Oh, I just couldn't begin, probably uh, maybe close to 70, family, it was a large family. One of my father's uh, brothers had nine children and incidently, none of them, incidently, none of them survived. Nine children and none of them survived. So that was uh, it was a large family.

How many of your immediate family survived the war?

Um, about uh five cousins survived. First cousins survived... from on my father's side... there was no one that survived on my mother's side. Unfortunately.

Your brothers, three brothers?

On my... my brothers?

Your brothers.

No, I uh, I lost uh my uh younger brother and my sort of step-brother, I lost. And my sister also, the one my mother adopted.

And your mother?

And my mother, perished.

Was the family a religious family?

Our family was not what you'd call orthodox, uh, it was rather conservative and very traditional. My father's family was on the orthodox side. My mother's was not. But uh, we would uh, attend the uh synagogue regularly on Saturdays, and Friday night we would have a beautiful dinner and my mother always had relatives for dinner and Saturday after the shul synagogue, my father would always bring company for lunch. So...

Did you attend Polish school, public school?

I uh, I was deprived of an education at an early age. I had about two grades. I didn't...

Before the war, you mean?

Before the war, yeah.

What do you remember about um, uh, the theater that your mother used to go to or the movies?

Oh, I remember uh, she would come home from the opera and she would uh talk about Carmen and I knew all the excerpts from Carmen, Rigoletto uh, Madame Butterfly, I would know all the songs, I could sing them. At a very early age I was introduced to that.

Was there Yiddish theater too?

There was a Yiddish [she clears her throat] excuse me, there was a Yiddish theater and [clears throat again] excuse me, Jidon and Schumerher were the uh, I remember like in a dream, they were the main actors, and my mother always had the front row so she knew all the actors. But I don't remember going to a Yiddish theater, no I don't remember...

Um...

I go to the movies quite a bit.

Your were in a uh, you used to go on vacation, the children would go...

Summertime.

Where would you go?

Um, it was just right side, eh right out of Łódź uh the other places like uh, Vishnaillagura, uh Lutommisk. These were just little uh summer cottages like. And my uh mother, my father would run the bakery there in the summer, when my father was alive. And my mother would stay in the City, and she would take care of it. So summertimes, we had two businesses.

This was not a purely Jewish place was it?

No, no, no, no. There was a farm let's say, strictly farm country.

Did you have non-Jewish friends, acquaintances in the family?

Um, only uh, the janitor and uh very few friends, close friends, no I would not call them friends. No, my family was strictly uh associated with Jewish friends.

Um, were you on one of these vacations in 1939?

This was just... yes. Uh, when Hitler declared war on Poland, we were in the country. Uh, September first we wanted to come back to go to school. And we were, we were not able to get any transportation. There were no busses, no uh streetcars or no trucks, not even a horse and carriage available. And uh, the trai... everything was mobilized for the war effort. And uh, I don't quite remember how we got home or we did get home my mother was in tears waiting for us uh for our return. And um, I think September 1st, yeah, that's when Hitler declared war on Poland. And uh immediately, uh the uh, Nazis occupied our city. It didn't take more than like two days and they were in Łódź.

Do you remember that?

When we came into [she clears her throat] excuse me, when we came back from the country, uh, the Germans were not in Łódź yet. They did not capture Łódź. But uh, within a day or so, I don't remember, uh, a lot of, lot of soldiers were coming down our street. Although our streets were not very wide, but it seemed like, like masses of soldiers would be marching through our streets and then we could see tanks and it was a frightening experience. Uh, they seemed to be marching in

unison, it was a very frightening uh experience when we did see the Germans and everybody would run in the house so they wouldn't have to face them again.

What did your family or you think about all this? The Germans, the war, um did you think in terms of the occupation of Poland or what they would do to Jews?

Oh, [clears throat] excuse me, I don't think uh that I thought uh about the occupation, it was very frightening. And I don't remember at home uh, our main thought was uh to stay together with the family and um help each other, but I cannot uh remember what my mother's thoughts were on the Germans occupying the city. It was just a very frightening experience when they did capture Łódź.

Did life start to change right away?

Oh extremely, yes uh. As soon as they captured uh, as soon as they occupied our city, every day they came out with different laws and orders uh, we had a curfew, we could only be seen between going about between 9:00 and 5:00 in the afternoon. We had to wear a yellow star on the chest and in the uh on my back. And uh, they took away our intelligensia, they took away all our lawyers, our writers, our teachers, our clergy, and uh our uh... I could not go to school anymore. The schools were closed. And so, I didn't have very much education. And uh, they took away our rabbis and uh we couldn't go to synagogues anymore. There was no one to conduct even our services. And in some instances, I remember they burned down a synagogue and uh. So I was deprived of an education at a very early age. And uh, we had uh, also were given some ration cards. But I don't ever remember having any sugar, or any milk, or any butter, or any meat. But mainly, our family was together. We're all together.

In the uh, early uh, stage of uh occupation. We were all happy that we could stay together in our home, but soon enough that had ended. Our life in our own home, and the Germans decided to gather all the Jews in one area. So we were deprived of our beautiful home and furnishings and we had to leave our home and take only what we could carry on our back, and move into the oldest part of our city. Um, also uh, a lot of Jewish people were evacuated from the suburbs of uh our City, Łódź. And uh, very shortly after that...

They were moved into the ghetto?

Into the ghetto, yeah, they formed the ghetto, they wanted the Jews, the Germans wanted to gather all the Jews in one area and uh, soon after they sealed the ghetto with barbed wires, no one could come out or no one could come in. And, life as bad as it was when the Germans just occupied our city, life in the ghetto was absolutely degrading, um, we had very little food. Our family was uh, like six, seven... were like seven people given one room in the ghetto and uh, we had to, everyone had to work. In other words you couldn't produce or uh work uh, no matter... regardless of the age, you had to find a job and everybody was working. And in the ghetto, they had very often these selections. They wanted to get rid of the um, older people, the children and the sick. And I remember one incident in the ghetto where they would come to the courtyard and ask everyone to come out to the courtyard. And so my brother, I had my three older brothers uh they would come out and they made sure that we, my mother and I and my little brother, they were hiding us in the basement in the bakery. And after the selection was over, they wanted to weed out all the sick,

all the old and the children. They would come in and I remember this incident when he, we were hiding in this uh, in the bakery, in the oven, my mother, I and my little brother, my mother put her hand over my brother's mouth he was coughing and she says, "don't do it in case the Germans come in and look for us here, they would hear you making this sound". And after the selection was over, my brothers would come in and, and say it was over. Thank God. And, my mother sort of knew they would not be taken because they were young and uh, healthy and so good looking. So uh, many selections were going on in the ghetto -- by the Germans and by some uh Jewish policemen who were in charge. And I remember this clearly how many times they would have a truck full of children, you could see it from the outside, and we never knew where the children went.

You had no suspicions?

No. When they were taking the children, they would just tell them they gonna go to a camp, we didn't know anything about it. Where they were going. Also, the life in ghetto became so unbearable that my brother, the adopted brother, he became very disillusioned with the life in the ghetto, there was no food and so he volunteered for work for uh, to a camp where they said they should go to labor camp where they could work and get more food rations. He was very disillusioned with the life. Uh, my brothers all worked on different jobs and I worked for 12 hours a day. Uh, but our family was together and uh, many, many of our relatives died of uh malnutrition, and uh diseases, and often when I would come from work I would see these dead bodies on this street and we didn't have much of a social life in Łódź, but most of

the time we could see each other at uh funerals. There was a social gathering and then at one point, they couldn't take care of the death anymore and I think they were just burying them in mass graves in the ghetto. People were just dying of diseases. Uh, there was so little food, I remember when they had uh, we had some food rations but uh, the food never came into the ghetto. By the time it did come in, were potatoes and the potatoes were frozen. And we would stay in lines for hours and hours to get some vegetables and we would take turns standing in line. My brother would start out and I would come out and then my other brother would come out. It would go on like a night and a day to get into the line for these various vegetables they were giving us. We were a little bit better off because, my brothers worked in a bakery so we had a little more bread. And at one time, I remember people were just dying everyday. My, my close relatives, my aunt and her children died and um, at one point, my mother was forced to give up one of my brothers. My oldest brother went already to that, to a volunteer camp. But my mother had to give up my bro... one of my brothers, Larry or my brother Jack and uh, she was really faced with a dilemma, she couldn't, she would say "what's the difference which hand you gonna cut off, the right or the left, it would hurt the same", so um, uh just before we went into the ghetto we had some diamonds and she mounted the diamonds in my heel and having these diamonds, she sold the diamonds and she got about 15 or 16 breads, I don't remember exactly, and she bought like a volunteer to substitute for my brother to send him to a camp. We never heard from these people. Once uh, you were taken on these transports, we never heard from these people again.

How was she notified that one of your brothers would go, do you remember?

Yes, they were both working in a bakery. So, they had records of my mother having two sons. And so that's how they were notified that one of them has to go. And this was the order from the President that we had. He was in charge of our ghetto, President Rumkowski. And he issued all these orders, I'm sure it came from a higher um command but he was the one that instituted all of these laws... in other words, he was the one that made sure that one of my brothers had to go. They sent out orders.

Who was that?

Rumkowski is the one that made sure...

Judenrat?

Yes, he was the head of it.

Did you ever see him?

I remember seeing him, yes, he was an older man grayed haired man, very distinguished looking man, but I never spoke to him or anything. I just remember pictures of him. 'Cause we had our own money printed in the ghetto and his picture was on the money. The money was worthless. But yet I remember that we had money printed in the ghetto.

At that point had you ever heard the name Auschwitz?

No, no, no, no, no, no, no. No. Soon enough uh, uh. Um, it happened in maybe 1944. It started beginning of '44 where people were sent out to camps and again we never heard from them again. And in 1944, I believe August, which is 40 years ago

now, uh an order came from the Germans, they were evacuating the ghetto. And I remember we were asked to take our belongings, again whatever we could carry and go to uh the railroad tracks which was the other part of our city. They told us we were gonna go to a camp, to labor camps. My entire family, we took whatever we could carry with us, a suitcase and again our measly belongings and uh as we got to the railroad tracks we were asked to uh, we were not asked, we were sort of pushed in these uh cattle cars and they filled these cattle cars to more than capacity where normally you would put like 25 cattle, they must have put in like 100, maybe 150 people, I couldn't even count and it was standing room only and we're really packed like sardines. And uh, the journey that would normally take probably... uh we didn't know where we were going at the time, they didn't tell us. But we were going to Auschwitz. And where normally it would take about three hours perhaps, maybe less, the journey must have taken endlessly like three days. And, we had no sanitary conditions. It was almost impossible to believe how we survived that journey for three days. They didn't give us any food, they didn't give us any water. And they sealed these cattle cars. And after probably three days, we arrived in this place called Auschwitz-Birkenau. And I remember there was a big sign, arbeit macht was leben sic, which meant that work will free you. And as these uh cars were approaching this tremendous like a camp, we could see in the background people wearing these uniforms, striped uniforms. And a lot of Nazi soldiers with dogs and all of a sudden they, all the cars stopped and uh they kept on saying, come on out, come on out. And right away they gave us directions, men should go on one side

and women should go on the other side. And uh immediately, we lost track of my brothers and I could see them from like far away, they were sort of tall. I could see their faces. [She weeps] My mother took my little brother's hand and she was told to go on the other side, excuse me [she's crying], it all happened so fast that within moments, my mother went on one side -- a German soldier -- we were -- was told to go on one side or, I went on the right side or left, I didn't know and my sister went with me and within moments like with a lightening temper they took away my brother and my little brother and my mother and we were told to march towards that I could see in the background were like a burning furnace. And we just still didn't know where we were going we were told to march and we were marching towards um this burning furnace and the air was so bad, it was such a foul smell and finally we came we were marching to a bath house. Uh, they uh, we had to uh strip totally we were to be, we had to undress totally and they shaved my hair just like my arm looks now and uh, they gave me one little dress, but my dress was a little longer because I was short so they gave me a longer dress. My sister who was very tall they gave her a little short dress and we're asked to go out and wait for the rest of the people to join our group. And again, we're marched towards these barracks. We came in there at night and as we're waiting for the rest of the people we were standing on these tiny little pebbles with no shoes, it was already cold and I was really thinking, boy in a way I'm so glad that my mother is not here with me. 'Cause, I couldn't see her suffer like this. And I was hoping that she would be taken care of now. In some uh, normal way she would be taken care of with respect. And we're

all going, marched to these barracks and we came in there at night and I remember there must have been like a 1,000 women marched into this, was a long barrack and it had like a furnace, a very long furnace. We're not given any pillows, we didn't have any mattresses or any anything. We slept on the bare cement floor. And in the morning we were waken up by a uh call. Every morning, they would get us up like 3:00 in the morning and we had to be accounted for. And I cannot understand why they would count us. There was no place one could escape. We're surrounded by barbed wires. Electrical barbed wires. And I remember the next morning, I got very close to one of the uh fences. I was looking for my mother up because I did see a lot of other women, I was hoping maybe I could see my mother. And I remember getting hit with some object, I don't remember with what. And all I remember is finding myself in the barracks. How I got there I don't even know. And that was my experience. My first day experience in Auschwitz. Uh in Auschwitz, life was extremely difficult. Um, we were given some uh a soup like a coffee and soup together, I don't even know what it was and we were given a piece of bread. Not ever... not every day so we're very hungry. Uh one thing was in my favor, I never got sick. And after spending...uh... But in Auschwitz also we had selections. We would go to this bath house and this German doctor, and I remember him so vividly. He had a coat, he wore glasses and he never put his hands through his arm... through his coat arms, through his coat sleeves, he always had it over his shoulder hanging. And during the selections in the camp, I would go in front of him and he would look me,

look at me from my tip of my toes up to my face. And somehow uh, I survived these selections and after being there about four weeks, I was sent to a um, another camp.

Do you know who that was?

That doctor?

Yes.

That was Doctor Mengele. Doctor Mengele, if I'm pronouncing it right. Yeah. He was the doctor. And we were just deprived totally in this camp of privacy. We were never alone for one moment. When we had these, we had to go to the bath house we were together. There wasn't -- privacy is a most uh, uh, important things to a human being. We never had any privacy. We were deprived totally of privacy. And um, then I was in many different camps, but...

Let me interrupt just for a minute, before we leave Auschwitz. At what point did you find out what had happened to your mother and your little brother?

No. No I had no idea. No news of my mother, no news of my brothers. No. I was just with fortunate that I still had my sister with me. And she was like a mother to me. No, I had no knowledge of what had happened to them at all, why we were in Auschwitz.

Did you hear about the crematorium?

I did not hear about the... I did see this furnace blasting away and uh, you could smell like the burning of bodies, but at the time I really didn't know where the smell came from. I did not know that they were burning people, there were crematoriums in Auschwitz.

You were in Auschwitz then for four weeks?

About four or five weeks I was in Auschwitz.

What did you do there?

Our day was mostly spent in the barracks. And uh, mostly taking that one dress and delousing it. Killing all the lice on my dress. I was not working in any way. And we had these appells, roll calls like twice a day.

How long would they last?

Oh, for hours where just they kept us. Standing there whether it was raining or whatever the weather was, and I cannot understand why they counted us every, twice a day they would have to account for us. We're like animals standing in a line five and the only heat we really had was from our bodies so we used to cuddle up and get warm from our own bodies. It was just a humiliating experience. They did everything to humiliate us. And there were no mirrors. I couldn't see how I looked, but I imagine I must have looked like an animal. Without my hair. There were no mirrors, no anything to look at.

What kind of food did you have there?

In Auschwitz we had a little some soup and uh I don't remember if we got bread every other day or every day a little piece. And when we did get the bread we had to hang on to it for dear life, because there were many people uh, just stealing anything they could, they would steal from you. So, I was so glad I had the older sister, she could sort of look after me and she would give me her bread if she could and I would always try and give her my bread. We would just share things. You had

to have a body with you in order to survive. There were people that were coming from different parts of Europe and we don't know who they were but there were some very, very wild people. They were thrown together. So it was good to have someone that you had like a friend or a relative with you. So I was very fortunate to have my um, sister there.

Were you ever beaten or punished outside that first day when you were...?

No I tried to avoid these uh, German, the Nazis, and I also, they were in charge of our camp and uh, I tried to avoid, I tried to follow the crowd, I would never want to stand out in any way. This was my experience the first day when I got there and I learned my lesson early. So I was not uh, going to be exposed to any of this. I was afraid.

How were you chosen to leave Auschwitz?

Uh, they came in again to one of these selection processes, again you were, the only thing, garment I had was my dress, I had uh, we had to take off that dress and again they looked us over again. If we're healthy enough they were going to send us to work, presumedly they were, we were supposed to go to work. And so uh, I was so glad that they would pick my sister and I because what we had here we would like to leave. We didn't know where we were going, but were so glad to leave this particular area, because we could see, everyday when we went out to be counted for, we would see bodies. Dead bodies. Uh, parts of bodies. And uh, they had these um, push carts and they had bodies stacked on these push carts everyday up to the hill. And we would also see uh, a lot of people just uh expiring wherever we could

our eyes would take us. There were a lot of people and Jewish people, the inmates of this camp in Auschwitz, picked up the bodies and put them in these push carts and they were taking them somewhere, I don't know where, because I don't remember seeing a grave or anything. So the life in Auschwitz was so unbearable. And so we were so glad to leave. We didn't know where we were going, but uh, at least we were leaving this particular place. And uh, I went through many camps and then we were sent to Stutthof.

Is that the first place, Stutthof?

I don't remember, but it was almost at the end. No, there was the uh..

Do you remember any of the others when you... labor camp?

They were not labor camps, uh, I remember them so vaguely. They were just smaller camps and they were scattered in the um, northern part of Poland very close to the bor... German border. But I don't remember any names or anything. They were smaller places.

You were working there?

No. No, I was never working. I was always just busy cleaning my one dress that I had. And I was just busy cleaning that dress, I did not work.

But you were with your sister?

I was still with her and I was sent, we were sent together to Stutthof, and some people in Stutthof were working, but again, I was not in the part where they were sending the people out to work. Stutthof was a um, a camp, it was a smaller camp than Auschwitz, but it was so difficult to be there again. Um, I saw so many people

dying, in fact, friends uh were dying uh, I don't know if they had uh, that typhus whatever they had, and all at once we had again a selection and they picked me and my sister to go to work supposedly. At the last minute, they took my cap off, they took her and they didn't take me again. And again I was left alone, totally alone. [In a weak voice] And then after they took her away from me, I took many risks. Uh, the camp next to us was going to work. So, I was uh taking the food from the people who were very sick and going to the camp there and giving them the food and getting clothes in return so I will give the clothes to the sick people. They were too sick to eat, so I would take their food rations and go to this working camp there and I was nearly caught there too, I was risking my life. And I would get the clothes and put on the these sick people. And I remember one incident at night, I opened the windows, it was wintertime, and they were burning up with fevers, so I opened the window and I took the icicles from the window and gave them to drink like cause they couldn't get the water and I remember once the search light was almost on me when I opened this window, but I had to get these icicles because these two girls, they were twins, I knew their parents, their parents also owned a bakery, so I took the icicles and gave them both uh inst... I couldn't get the water. So I would help them and this way -- they were just too sick to eat.

Did they survive?

I don't think so, I don't think so. They could never go on the marches, because in Stutthof I um, I didn't work again and I, I was the only girl my, that, I was the youngest actually in our barracks and the uh woman in charge of it must have been

a Ukrainian woman. She took a liking to me so I would get a little extra soup. And um, soon this ended and the Germans were coming closer to our camp. And uh, they evacuated our camp and we started walking.

Up to this point, did you ask anyone or did you think about um, what had happened to your mother, your brother, or was it Stefania?... your sister's name?

Othella.

Othella?

Um, no, but every night uh, the thought that really kept me alive was the thought that my brothers may survive and every night that was the best part of my life in camp is going to sleep, and just dreaming of my family and I would always think of my two brothers because they were young and strong and so good looking, and I was hoping they would survive, and uh, that's what really kept me going, the thought of finding my brothers. Whichever camp I went to, I would look for them and I would look for my mother, but it was so useless. And so, we were marching for about four weeks and as I was trading with this camp that went to work, I um inherited a pair of shoes. But the shoes were four times my size. So when we were going on these marches it was wintertime, my shoes kept rubbing against... against my uh foot and I have really got so many frostbites, I still have visible marks from the marching. We would march like fifty miles a day, every day, I don't even know how far we would walk. And we had uh, few uh soldiers in the front. We started with about a 1,000 people and every day people kept just dying off and if you couldn't keep up with the speed, they would just uh get left behind. The Germans would just shoot, shoot them

right there or kick them to death. And uh, every day we would be losing tens, more than ten, fifteen people a day, I remember, and when finally got to one place to a barn in Upperschlazien, upper Poland, near Gdansk, then Danzig, I remember coming to a barn and when we came into this barn, we were maybe left like maybe 250 maybe 300 people out of a 1,000 women. And we came in at night into this barn and we didn't know that we were sleeping on dead bodies again we were meeting some other inmates from different camps evidently and there were some men in that barn. And I could hear a lot of screamings from the other side... in that uh camp. It was a barn like, it wasn't even a camp.

Do you think there were rapes going on in there?

I don't know, there were um there were women and men evidently they did rape some women, but these were also inmates, I didn't know if they were Jewish faith or not. But they were also prisoners of war, I don't know uh... Something had to be going on because there were screams coming from that direction and then the next morning uh, we were asking for some food. And we asked one German woman soldier and I said to her, are we going to get some food, we need some water, we need some food. And she says, in the afternoon uh, we should be getting some soup, they should be cooking some soup. And uh, about 1:00 no one came, no soup, no food again, and we're getting weaker and weaker. And uh, people were going, trying to go out of the barn and to see if they can go up to the garbage cans around there and look at some food or something, maybe potatoes, it was a small town, uh village. And, they came back and they said, there are no guards. But, we didn't move,

because we figure well, it's propaganda, they want us to get out of the barn so they could kill us, shoot at us. And other few people went out looked out again there were no guards you know guarding us, and I remember all of the sudden, they opened the doors from the barn and we were charging out like cattle. Again, like animals out of this barn together like you chase a running horses. And we didn't see any guards and we walked like one block and we could see Russian tanks going and um, and I kept looking for my brothers on these tanks. I mean, I think I must have lost my mind. I saw men and I was so, must be my brothers must be one on these tanks. And the Russian soldiers were throwing food at us. And I remember having, going into one of the German homes and putting on some clothes, but I was so afraid that behind the closet a German was gonna come out and kill me there. So I picked up his suit, er a pillowcase, I'll never forget this, and I was standing on this corner and these soldiers were giving me all kinds of food and I had a full pillowcase of food and I couldn't move it. I left the whole pillowcase with food. And we were taken to a hospital by the uh, Russian soldiers. And I had these soldiers guarding me all night with a lantern and every time another soldier, a Russian soldier would come in, this other soldier would say, rebunkya, rebunkya, meaning uh, baby, a baby, don't touch her. I don't know what they were doing to these other woman. And uh, in spite of my age I must have looked like I was eight years old at the time I was so uh dehydrated and I didn't have any food, I must have lost more than half of my weight.

How long were you there?

I was in the hospital for quite a while because I got very sick. Whatever I ate at night, I would have to give it up in the day time, it was just like my stomach could not hold any food. And my eyes were hungry but my stomach could not take all this food at one time. So, it took us quite a bit of, probably about six weeks or so until we got used to the food to normal food and then I decided to, I have to go to Łódź. I have to go back and to find my brothers. This was my whole purpose in surviving. And so, I managed to get a ride through the uh, with some soldiers, Russian soldiers and I got back to our city in Łódź. Unfortunately, no one was there and again I had no place where to live, where to spend the night. It was so frightening. And then I said, why did I survive? What was the purpose of surviving, now I have no one that survived with me? And I finally spent the night uh with the janitor of our home and no one came back to look for me and no one survived. And after a while they formed an orphanage in Łódź and this President Rumkowski, who was in charge of our ghetto, he used to be the President of this orphanage where I stayed after the war. Helenovick. It was just like a suburb of Łódź.

What was the attitude when you came to Łódź of this janitor?

I was extremely frightened of these people. Because they were non-Jewish and they didn't like us too much before the war. Although my mother was very charitable, she used to give them food and money, but the younger people, the children of the janitor were very anti-semitic. And I had to spend the night there and I spent a sleepless night because there was an incident during the war that my brother ran into

with one of these children of the janitor. And, she would tell on him that he was Jewish. He stayed out late at night after the curfew, and so I remember that incident how she was anti-Jewish. But I had no place where to stay that night. And I spent the night with them. And the following morning I went to the Jewish community and asked for a list of survivors and at this point they only knew that my cousin Malla had survived. But she was not in Łódź at the time. And um, I spend again a night with them again I didn't have where to stay, but within a few days they opened up an orphanage and I went to live in the orphanage and one day I came into our bakery and I went downstairs, the bakery was downstairs, and I went into the working area and I asked, and one of the men said who is this little girl? And the owner, because someone took over our bakery after the war, the owner said that I was Mylef was my father's name, I was his daughter and one of the workers there remembered me and said, oh my God, one of her brothers survived. And through the tears as I went into that bakery, to our bakery, I heard that one of my brothers survived. And so immediately my mind started to work how I'm going to leave Łódź to search for my brothers.

Did you?

I did, but the clothes that I owned belonged to this city. And it was very difficult, so we ran away at night, I joined, my brother told me about his, a friend that he had once in the ghetto who was a Zionist, that if anyth... if any of us want to go to Israel, they should only think of this boy. His name was Berman, I remember. And I contacted this man and he uh, got me and about five other children and the um, I

don't know what organization from uh, the Hagganah or something, came in and took us away at night. We had to leave at night, because everything we had on belonged to the city where, where, like the... uh, anything I owned my dress belong to them. I was like a ward of the what do you call it, um. Anyhow, so we joined this group and we were walking, we got papers that we're Greeks, and we're going towards the boats in Italy. And the boats were overcrowded so they sent us to Germany, to Munich. And in Munich, I spent the night in the museum, I remember on these stairs that's where we slept. And from there they send me to a Kibbutz, that was about 50 miles away from Frankfurt, Bad Nauheim. And after I got settled in the Kibbutz, I went into the office. It was a DP camp in um, not Sax, in Sachsenhausen, I think. And I went into the office and asked for the survivors again for the list of survivors, and this girl that I asked happened to be in love with my brother already. And um, she says, who are you? I says, I'm um, Ruth Weintraub. She says my brother survived and a month before that my brother Jack joined him. So immediately she arranged transportation for me to Bad Nauheim. And it was the longest, which was only 35 miles away, and I says that I don't believe they are, they survived. She took me in her home and showed me pictures of my brother Larry and he was already in an American uniform. He was working for the American Army already. And so, uh, I did get transportation to Bad Nauheim and I remember my brother Jack was carrying a bundle of clothes on this terrace and as he saw me this man said, I brought you a little girl. And as he saw me, that whole bundle of clothes just fell on the floor, all over it was drizzling I remember, it was almost raining. And

we were just walking and hugging each other. And we went to see my brother Larry and I was caught between my two brothers. And it was the most wonderful reunion of my life. And slowly uh, I realized that my mother did not survive and by then we knew that my mother had to be cremated in Auschwitz. She went to the crematorium and um, my brother was, they were all gassed. In Auschwitz. My sister didn't survive either. She couldn't survive the work. I met some people that were working with her in her camp and she didn't survive the walk. They were walking everyday 50 miles. So that was my most wonderful day of my life, meeting my two brothers.

Why do you think you survived the way you did?

Well, I was perhaps young and I was um, healthy and the thought of having the life that I had as a child with my family and the thought that I, maybe my brothers would survive gave me the will, really, to survive. It was every day. That's what really kept me alive, the thought of reuniting with them one day. And it was very uh, it was a very positive thought. It was my brothers, my brothers, constantly I would, I would go to sleep with them, I would get up with them and they were always in my thoughts, you know and that's what really kept me alive. I didn't think my little brother would survive, and I was very fortunate.

Are the things that um you do routinely now, things you see or hear that remind you of anything in particular that happened during the war and that take you back there?

I can't um, like um for instance what do you mean?

Oh, if you see someone that looks familiar or if you hear a song or see a movie that you may have seen...when...?

Oh, I read everything on the, on the Holocaust. I read every book that um, anybody writes uh, I can't uh, forget what has happened but I still can't live with it every day, because I wanted a normal life for my children. So um, there's not a day that goes by that someone or something would not remind me of my family, a song or something that my mother sang, but I really tried to um, sort of push it away in my mind what has happened and I wanted a normal life for my family and for myself. If I had to live with this, I could never keep my head above and ever smile so, I sort of don't live with it everyday. That does not mean that I don't remember, I remember every single day something that had happened to me. So many years ago.

Have you told your children this story?

Yes, I uh, my children know the story. And um, my son is very active with the children of the Holocaust survivors. But again, I try to make a normal life for them. I would answer questions, but I would never try and tell them my stor... when they were little they didn't really know about it. And as they grew older, they uh, my little one uh, went to Temple Israel and he took this class on the Holocaust. And my son Bernie has in fact studied a lot on it.

Before we conclude today, is there anything you would like to add?

Well, I just wanna make sure that this does not happen again. And uh, and I'm here to uh, for the reason, just, I was the witness to this Holocaust and I wanna make sure

that it will never happen again and also that the stories that the Holocaust was just a hoax is just not true. I'm the one that was there. And I'm the one that survived all the hardships and I'm here to tell. That's why I told my story. 'Cause I was the witness to this and when you hear these people denying the Holocaust, it's almost unbelievable. I was there and I'm here to tell it. So I do hope that this will never repeat itself again for my children's children, for generations to come.

Thank you.

Thank you.