

BLUMA

I: Please tell us your full name

B: I am Bluma Goldberg and I was born in Poland in a small town called Pinto and it's like the eastern, southern part of Poland

I: When was that

B: That was in 1926 Now you know how old I am. And my parents had six children. There were five girls and a brother and

I: Where did you fit in the family

B:: I was kinda in the middle. I had 2 older sisters and my brother was older. And I was kinda in the middle and then I had 2 younger sisters.

I: Well, tell me something about your family and your early childhood in Poland

B: Of course, I said I lived in a small town. Everything I remember was really good. Even though we were not wealthy. My father was a leather merchant and my mother was a home taking care of the children. Cause at that time in Europe, women did not work. They stayed home and raised a family and I went to school there and I have very good really memories from school-public schools. I had a lot of friends and I was a very happy child and we were a very close knit family

I: How did your family observe Jewish tradition. Were they very religious

B; We were not very religious but we observed the Sabbath and all the holidays you know and Saturdays. We did not go anywhere particularly. You couldn't even go to the movies on Saturday. That was not permitted because we didn't have cars to drive. We just walked. And I had a lot of friends-Jewish and non Jewish friends and when I went to school and I met my teacher, I used to carry her brief case and that was a big honor for me. It was a small town but it was a pretty town. One side we had mountains and on the other side a lake. So we loved to go when we had time. We used to go skiing and of course in the summer time swimming and as I said we had a very happy life. We had new clothes for Easter-Passover and a new pair of shoes. When you have six children, it's a lot of a big expense. But we were happy. We didn't know any better So--

I: When did you notice that things began to change

B: Well, like in--I was a child. I was 11, 12 like in '37, '38. People began to talk about Hitler in Germany and but you know like people talk today about other countries what's going on. But we didn't believe that. It's just rumor of this and that. But they

were not rumors. In 1939 the war broke out as you know. And of course the first country Germany invaded was Poland but prior to that my parents were talking about maybe we should go somewhere. First of all we didn't have any money to really immigrate to go some place else so we were stuck there. Like I said we didn't believe that anything like this could happen and

I: Anything like what . What kind of rumors did you hear

B: Well, we heard rumors that Hitler's gonna take all the Jews and take them to concentration camps or he's going to kill and the Jewish people, you know. But we still didn't believe anything in 1939. On September the German army walked into our town and the whole town was on fire right away and we lived in the center of town., In Europe most of the cities have In the middle of the cities had squares and we lived right there and our home was burned down. So anyway all the people they told us to go to the church which was also in the square and they separated the women the women took the children and they separated the men were on one side of the church and the women on the other and we saw the German army walking there and we had to lift our hands and say Heil Hitler you know. we stayed there for about three hours and then they let us go and we were lucky on one of the streets where it was not burned down, we had an uncle that live there. So the family went to live with my uncle and of course we lost everything we had. The first day when the Germans walked into our town and we live there til 1942. In 1942 we heard from people that the Germans are rounding up all the Jewish people and taking them to crematoriums.

I: Well between 1939 and 1942 were you still living with your uncle?

B: Right

I: what was life like during those few years

B: Well we didn't starve you know we had something to eat that's about it but

I: You were already identified as being Jewish

B: Oh definitely yeah . We had to wear our yellow star and we couldn't go out in the evenings. There were curfews like after 6 o'clock or 7 o'clock I'm not sure now

I: Did you continue to go to school

B: Yes, continued to go to school and it was much rougher on the men or boys than on the women. Of course, the Polish people were not the nicest friends of the Jewish people either, you know, so some of the you know hated the Jews just as much as the Germans did

I: Do you remember anything about how people treated you

B: I did not have really any problems. I personally didn't but my brother did and my father did you know sometimes people ganged up on them you know tried to beat them you know so they tried to stay home most of the time. You know, not to be exposed to something like that especially in the evenings

I: Why do you think it was rougher on the men . How was it rougher on the men

B: I don't know I really don't know. I don't know just because you know dirty Jew a Jew

I: People were more critical

b: People were more critical yes. Anyway after 1942 when we knew that we were not going to survive if we just stayed there, we're going to be picked up one morning and taken to the camps so

I: Had people been leaving your area. You said they thought they might come and pick you up

B: Well, I'm taking about the Germans

I: The germans would come pick you up. Is that what you meant

B: Well that's what they did

I: So you saw other people

B: I personally had not seen it. We knew it happened from other towns. That they were going to pick up by trains and take us to the crematoriums . So my mother made my sister . she gave us a little bit money whatever she had and she told us just to leave and go in the woods to hide and my sister is four years older than I so we went and at first we didn't want to go because whatever going to happen to them you know without we all go together cause we didn't want to survive by ourselves. Survive we didn't know what's gonna happen. So anyway my parents made us leave and we went in the woods . Later I found out that my father and my brother joined the underground and my sister my older sister had a baby at the time and the three younger sisters went with my mother ----- . Now my sister and I like I said went into the woods then we met a cousin and an uncle. The cousin was the one that we lived with and we built a shed there and at night we went in the country to buy food and we lived there two months. It was rough but we didn't know was gonna happen. If somebody would find us you know they would kill us right there. So one day this young man came and he wanted to join us. He wanted to live with us. He looked like like he just escaped from prison. I mean he had a beard and at that time beards were not in style and he looked very vulgar and so we told him o.k. So when he went to get his belongings we ran away because we got scared and so we ran to a nearby town which was called Munich which was about 30 kilometers from where we were and this was another

uncle who lived there and he was a carpenter and he was left because the germans wanted him to work for them and thats why he was still there. So it was four of us-mu sister and I an uncle and a cousin and we were hiding there under 2 by 4's and we stayed there for 5 days. One day we could hear the SS came in and looked for us because somebody told about us and they couldn't find us. Two days later it happens again and they didn't find us so we decided that we couldn't stay there any longer and then the Germans had a new a new law came out. If you are the age of 15 to 25 to come to this and this place there are going to be trucks waiting for you to take you to labor camps. I wasn't quite 15 yet so I lied a little bit and I always have a round face and so they accepted me and my sister and they took us to Kelser. A nice size city in Poland not too far from where we were and there was a german factory that made munitions.

I: So you wanted to go

B: Yes I definitely I wanted to go any place because I knew I couldn't that I couldn't stay out there So I was in charge It was a tremendous big factory. We made little bullets. . I had eight machines and the 8 machines were as long as a wide as this room and my job was to feed them with material. I called it material you know it was just a long I don't know what it was made out of, but it made bullets and I still have these little-on my hands from the oil from the machine that made the bullets. Life was--you could survive there and there were about 200 boys and about 300 girls and we had running water. It was more or less clean. We slept on bunkers you know and my sister and I were together all the time. The food was you could survive on it and it was o.k. So we were there for two years in Horstatara. when Russia started coming closer west they moved to another city and the name of it was Thunsthov.closer west to Germany and there we also worked in an ammunition factory.

I: How did you get news from the outside about what was going on

B: We had no idea what was going on. What day it was because we were all the time on seven day shifts from seven to seven and the next week from seven to seven at night and one it was a tremendous factory and there was a lot of noise and I don't know what time it was. It was like in the middle of the night. I just closed my eyes. I was standing facing these machines . You couldn't sit down anywhere . My boss who was a short man gray and it was a typical general. Everyone was shaking when he was approaching you so he came and like I say I closed my eyes for a minute and he saw me and he came over and slapped y face and I woke up quick. Since then I remembered never to fall asleep again but anyway that's the only bad experience I had in this labor camp . Like I said my sister was there with me and she s the reason that I survived because when you are by yourself maybe at least if you have a very close friend that you can talk to . it was very hard when you're all alone. I mean in this camp it wasn't so terrible but later when we went to concentration camps it was

really more important to have somebody. In 12944 one day the Germans came to ---and they took us all to a train on the trains

I: This was after you had left

B: After I left Kelsa and Chesterhow.

I:; How long were you at Chesterhow

B: Not long, just a few months

I: Did you walk there as well

B: Yeah, I walked there too also to the ammunition factory. Again the Russians were coming closer so they decided to take us all to Germany. They took us to the train station and we went on trains. We had no idea where we were going

I: So they never taught you anything

B: No No and you know they put a lot of people in --. Today you sit down and you have your seat. Anyway we went to Germany and the first thing they did when we came to this tremendous place, they took all our personal belongings. We still had some personal belongings from home at that time and they gave each one of us prison clothes. The stripped concentration dresses. They didn't pay any attention if it was too short or too big or too long and any jewelry that we had was taken away from us and they gave us some shoes and some socks

I: What was your feeling to this. I guess you are no longer at a munitions factory

B: It was really bad. It was very bad and we knew that something terrible was going to happen to us but he had no choice. So what happened was they took us to barracks there and in these barracks you have no--it was just a floor. Just an empty room. There were about 40 girls of us in one room was winter time was very cold there was no water no bathrooms nothing like that. In the morning they counted us. They called it a (peal?) We got up at 5 o'clock in the morning and they counted people you know. Then they give us a cup of coffee. For lunch they gave us like a a potato soup-potato peels of soup and a piece of black bread and at lunch you have a cup of black coffee again. Like I say we have no running water and dirty filthy cold. Diseases started spreading. People started-people who were there before in the same room started dying and people from the other cabins or barracks-people would have typhoid fever and all kind of diseases. Some people just went absolutely crazy really. They were talking to themselves. They were walking back and forth and the only work was just to carry--there was a pile of junk at one end of the place. They told us to carry it to this place. That's the only occupation we had. Then the next time we carried it from this side to the other side. We all lost a lot of weight and we were there for three months and I

think we were there for another three months. I don't think anybody would have survived. We had lice all over us I had some sacks and I could see it just all over me and there was no way I could get rid of it and I cried a lot and I became I mean you didn't think like a human any more you didn't care what was going to happen to you. You didn't want to live any more. Like I say the cold and hunger and disease, you just wanted to die that's all.

I: You and your sister were still together

B: Yes

I: And you talked

B: definitely Then one day we got lucky again. This commission came and 2 Germans. We took off our clothes and they told us to take off our clothes to go to work in a factory and so they looked us over as we went by . One goes right and the other goes left and I was lucky I went right and finally my sister went right also. So they took us out from Bergenbelsyn and went Bulgoi. They made airplanes there and I was painting the number the number on the airplane and it was much better than it was much better than Bergenbelsin. It was bad but it was much better than Berginbelsin and they were very nice to us like they gave us a piece of bread or a piece of fruit and that's how we survived.

I: How did they get the food to you

B: Because we work together. After this camp, I don't remember exactly how many miles we were away but after that camp we were in tow other camps and the last camp I was in was Turheheim and that was in _____ Barviaian Germany and when we went to (Barvaria) I had typhoid fever. I was sick I was burning up with fever and there was no medication . No aspirin or anything and just a filthy building. We lay on the floor like a dog. Thanks to my sister really I don't know how she did it . Somehow she got a piece of fruit exchanged it for her portion of a piece of bread because that's the only piece of bread we got the whole day. So she game away the piece of bread to get an apple for me so I could survive. So I could eat the apple because I had so much fever. Then when I got better, she got sick and that was in 1945 March of 1945 in April of 1945 the Americans liberated us and when they came in we were like in a camp with woods all around. We could see the flames burning because that was plant right there.

I: Were you aware at the time that the war

B: yes yes, that much sense I had

I: How did you know that

B: Well, just common sense, I think. The Germans wouldn't start a fire there. We could hear the bombs. We could see the airplanes. So then this American from the Red Cross came to our

camp and he called out if a few of us could walk around. And we stood around him May 10 or 12 girls standing around him and he called me out and he talked to me. He said how old are you and I told him and I said, he said do you have anybody. Is your mother here. No I'm sure I've lost everybody,. I have a sister who has typhoid fever and she is very sick in the barrack and I told him how old I was and who I was because and he had enough just to look at me to see how I looked. His tears were just coming down. He was crying. He said don't worry, I'll take good care of you. Now we'll take you to hospitals and take good care of you. We are here now and you know , you know

I: Do you remember how you felt when they came. When you saw the Americans

B: How I felt when I saw this American. Well, he was like God. Like seeing God------. Til today of course I wish I knew who he was because I never dreamed I would be in the United States and maybe you look him up and talk to him. I would give anything in the world to meet this man but under these circumstances it was impossible and there were so many people around us. People were dying in the last minutes. We called them mousemunions. Just skin and bone. No more energy to walk and it really is a miracle when I think about it how I survived. I'm telling you this story in thirty minutes but this took years and those were my teen age years and I lost my parents. I lost my sisters and brothers and I guess it was not to be. That's all I can say.

I: You told me how your sister gave you an apple when you were sick. Were there ways you were able to help her when she was sick?

B: I was very kind to her you know. We did have cold water, and I took a rag and wiped her off with cold water and I told her to be strong and maybe a miracle will happen and maybe we will survive one day.

I" And where did you go after

B: The Red Cross took us to a hospital in Germany and the name of it was Holhousen. That was near Lantgerg in Barvaria. It was a Catholic hospital and there were nuns taking care of us and the doctors were just wonderful. They started us off with just liquids and 1 tablespoon of rice for lunch and dinner because a lot of people died because they over ate after the concentration camp. We stayed in the hospital for about 10 weeks and well my sister really was the one that was sick with typhoid and looked at me looked awful and they took me too and I was there and little by little we gained some weight and like I said the doctors and the nurses could be made us our first dresses and then a girl friend of mine lives in Milwaukee now, we went to Munich and we looked for relatives-for survivors and we checked the Red Cross and everything but you know I did talk to somebody that told me my mother and the rest of my family went to Auswitch-the crematoriums . And my brother and my father who joined the underground, they died just

like a month before they were lib--before the Americans came. So that is tragic.

I: How did you get this

B: From other people who survived. So like my husband of course, I didn't know my husband then. He was at Auschwitz. He survived. He was lucky. They took him some place else. To another camp and so after

I: Did you meet people when you were in the camp. Did you talk to people and get to know them

B: yeah, yeah Some of the people I'm still in touch with , that survived.

I: So what type of things did you all talk about

B: We We talked about our past about our families of where they were we had no idea where they were. And if Hitler was going to accomplish his mission and kill everybody and we tried to tell each other to be strong and maybe we would survive and

I: But you always knew people who didn't

B: Oh, yes yes definitely in Auschwitz there were thousands and thousands of women that was strictly a woman's camp. Anne Frank was in Auschwitz and she didn't survive and I mean they took people there just to starve . They died of starvation cold and disease. Why they didn't have enough women in Auschwitz to put in -----I don't know what the purpose was of it.

I: When you got out of the hospital, where did you go next

B: O.k. They took us to -----which is about 50 kilometers from Munich . It is a displaced persons camp and it was a camp like Fort Jackson and my sister and I and my girl friend lived in one little apartment and there were people all over Europe that survived. A lot of younger people between ages 18, 19, 30, 35 because the older people didn't survive and they gave us some clothing, food

I: What type of things did you do while you were in this camp

B: At first we didn't do anything then they opened schools, different schools. I went to the -----school to learn how to sew and they had like I said different schools and then some people as soon as they could they went to Palestine at that time and a lot of people were marrying that's how I met my husband, too. He came from a different camp. He came from Dachau and I met him there and we got married in 1946 and

I: Well, how did you meet your husband

B: How did I meet? A friend of mine from my home town he told me

Bluma let's go I know a guy who has a camera and I would like for him to take a picture of us so that was and he took a picture of me and he came to my apartment to bring the pictures . That's how we met. The rest I won't tell you so we got married in 1946 and he's a great guy. A great sense of humor and a will to live. He's a much stronger person than I am. I; 'm the weakling in the family and I get depressed very easily. Well, he tells me I have a a lot to live for. We do have a beautiful family and we should thank God every day that we survived and made a new life also. We cannot live in the past . You have to live in the future and hope that something like this will never happen again.

I: As you met people when you were in Landberg, how did people respond to you knowing that you had been in these concentration camps

B: You mean the German people

I: Right

B: They couldn't be nicer to us. The german people and I'm sure they felt guilty. A lot of people said they didn't know what was going on but that was hard to believe. Very hard to believe. So when my husband and I got married, we moved into the city to apartment. We moved in with this German couple. They didn't have any children and they were wonderful to us. They had a beautiful apartment. He worked for the government also and we live there til 1949 and my sister went to Munich to that was the registration. And we could register to go any place in the world. So she registered to come to the United States. I wanted to go with her to register. My husband said no. She's going for nothing. That couldn't happen She couldn't come. its impossible you know that they let you come to the United States. 9ut she went and three months later, she had her papers to come to the United States. So before she left, she made sure I went with her. My husband said he didn't want to go, but at that time we already had plans to go to Munich and I registered and in the meantime she came to the United States to Columbia, South Carolina and the lady there asked me where I would like to go . Well, I said this is the only sister I have. We are the only family left. So we'd like to be together so that's why we came to Columbia, South Carolina. People here were very wonderful to us . Everybody was just wonderful

I: How did you get here

B; I'm sorry

I: How did you get to the United States

B: How did we get to the United States. We came by a warship . The name of it was----- . We came from Germany Hamburg to New Orleans. It took us two weeks and at that time, I had a baby my oldest son--was 18 months old. A lot of people got sick on the ship. The waters were very rough. That's how we made it. We came

to New Orleans and Hadassa ladies met us and took us to the Jewish Center. They had very nice lunch prepared for us and we spoke for a while and then they took us to the train station and then we came to Columbia. From there we had a representative from the Hadassa organization and we lived there with my sister. We lived together for a while and the Jewish community was responsible for us for the next two years to support us but my husband and I didn't want any charity so we, he said I'll sweep the roads, you know, I'll do anything. He was a painter in Poland and he couldn't get a job because didn't know the language here. So he got a job up at general arts and that was the beginning. It was very hard the first couple of years. The language, everything was different and

I: How did you adjust with the new baby knowing anybody but I was hoping

B: It was very hard. It was very hard. Once I learned the language and was able to communicate with people that life would get better and my husband was a very hard worker. He worked long hours. Came home late at night. I was alone with a baby, of course my sister was here. She was a big help and people came to see us and tried to be helpful. It wasn't easy. It was tough. It was very hard and

I: When you met people did you tell them your background.

B: Well, if people asked me I'd know that a lot of people a lot of parents did not want to talk to their children and other people about the holocaust, but I felt then my children were old enough to understand that they should know. I was a little afraid of the consequences you know because children might feel if you were in a prison, you had done something bad you know. Maybe they were too young to understand at that time about the war and Hitler but little---understand and they were wonderful and I don't regret it that I told them and at times the-that because of that we were better parents than other parents and other people. After I had my children, I hugged them til they were to big for me to hug them. I took real good care of them and I was a good mother. They are wonderful. They are all wonderful. I hope this is

I: Do you have anything you would like to add

B: I'd like to say a few words, but I was afraid I couldn't remember. I want to thank ETV and the Council on the Holocaust for letting me give this presentation. As you are probably aware to review these events in my life is very painful to me. I bear this pain willingly only if you the viewer and you the student take it into your heart or your experience too so that somehow you and I will have contributed together to diminish the possibility of it ever happening again to any people from any people. Thank You.

I: Well, after you've gone through everything, if there is something that you feel like that you left out or anything else that you want to share.

B: No I'd just like to say, a human being is stronger I feel than you can imagine and what a person can go through in life and still survive from my own experience and so far as Hitler is concerned and Nazi Germany, I cannot imagine that any people could do such atrocities to other people that this is to me unbelievable. It is very hard for me to conceive and believe that people can do things like this to other people and that's the reason really I like to tell the story. I just hope it will never happen again

I: Well, I thank you

B: Thank you very much. Thank you.