

Rolling. OK, Henny, I want you to tell me about when you left one work camp and ended up in Dachau. Start with what time of year it was and how old you were. And then just start telling me what your life was like. What work you did, where you lived.

After the ghetto, Vilna ghetto, was liquidated, they brought us to Kaiserwald, to Latvia. And it was a terrible camp. And we were there two days. And then they brought us to one of the camps. Now, I don't remember.

OK. That's all right. Let's stop for a minute.

That's so--

Number two.

Now, wait just a sec. OK. Now, go ahead.

And then they brought us to DÄ¼nawerke. DÄ¼nawerke or verke, whichever way you pronounce. And we were there close to a year. The work was very hard, unbelievably hard work. There were people outside. There were all nationalities. There were even the Russians there that worked in all parts of DÄ¼nawerke. They didn't give us enough of food. We were always hungry, always cold, and always overworked.

So tell me when you ended up in Dachau. Was it in the fall of 1944?

Yes, it was 1944. They brought us to Stutthof. And then another selection was done to all the inmates, where everybody else was going, and where everybody else was sent to different camps. We were brought to Poniewiez. And we were there two months.

And then they brought us to Landsberg, Lager Eins, which was one of the complexes of Dachau. It was an unbelievably terrible, terrible camp. The time of the year was the end of fall. The camp was in the woods. It was freezing. I didn't even have a jacket.

I was trembling with a cold, and I ran into the barracks, and they started to call me. And I was just trembling. I couldn't. They asked me to sing. And I heard sounds of music. So somebody handed me a jacket and ordered me to sing. I went over.

I was told to go over to the orchestra. There were about six musicians sitting in the middle of the camp. Nazis were sitting around on benches. The inmates were standing behind the barbed wires and waiting for the concert. They played the William Tell Overture.

And they asked me what I'll be able to sing. I thought, they're Germans, I didn't want to sing Yiddish songs. I sang-- I told him I'll sing Schubert's Serenade in German. And from then on, we were like a unit. We were singing and entertaining, going from one camp to the other. On Sunday, when everybody was resting, we had to walk miles and miles from one camp to the other to perform.

And it was you and these same musicians who did this? OK.

After the liberation, yes.

So tell me a little bit about what you did during the week when you were singing with them at this particular camp. And put your book down.

We worked in Moll. M-O-L-L. It was a terrible, terrible place. We called it Egypt, like we were the slaves in Egypt. The work was very, very physically hard. And the whole surroundings, I can't even describe it. It was so unbelievable.

There was a gigantic man-made mountain so high. And some people had to climb this mountain. We didn't know what it was. After the war, we found out that it was some kind of an atomic research center that they tried to camouflage. And we did all the work there. [INAUDIBLE] We had to walk up and down the highest mountain, carry stones, and rocks, and cement. Very hard work for young girls. For everybody.

How long did you-- what were your days like? And did you have friends there? My sister was with me. And of course, we all became friends because people were brought from all parts of the country. There weren't people exactly from my hometown because we were always sent to different places.

But we lived in those unbelievable bungalows, which were more deeper in the ground there, on the top was damp, cold.

We never had enough food. And no matter how little I had, I always shared. And the girls used to tell me, you'll kill yourself. Because we used to get such a tiny piece of bread for the day. And when somebody walked by and looked at me, I gave a bite. I just couldn't take it. I had to give it away. I'm sorry.

It's all right.

So was it from that camp that you left to go on the train?

Yes.

On the dead?

One night, we came late at night from work. That day, we came late. I don't know what happened that they brought us late. And we saw the whole camp was in an uproar. The whole Landsberg camp was in. Like nobody was sleeping, usually they sleep at night. And we were told that the camp is being liquidated. And-- sorry. Please cut it up.

Do you want to stop?

Part.

Do you want to stop for a minute?

I don't know why I'm crying all of a sudden. So we had to take whatever belongings we had and start walking on the highway. We walked endlessly the whole night. And then we saw-- it was when the sun started to come out.

We saw a German pass us by. And he said, [GERMAN]. You know what it means? Hold your head up high, freedom is coming. This was a civilian German. And then we walked, we kept on walking.

And a German was standing behind the fence. And he screamed at the Nazis, [GERMAN]. We looked like little children, we were so starved, and hungry, and you know, underfed, and were so skinny that we looked like children. And he said, you're disgusting, let them go. What do you want? You're animals, let these children go.

And then they brought us. Do you want details about this march? We were walking endlessly and we heard shots. And we understood we're on a death march. Whoever couldn't go on-- whoever couldn't was being shot.

And while I was walking and it was still nighttime, I fell asleep while walking, and I was exhausted, and I was very tired, and I walked off the road. And somebody grabbed me fast. One of my people-- you know, we were walking in fives. And she dragged me in or they would have they would have thought that I'm trying to run away. Because I went off the road.

And I woke up. And then they told us to lie down, to rest. The minute they told us to rest, right away, we had to get up. It was so cruel. Like they didn't give us a chance at all for the body to rest.

Then all of a sudden, we saw from far away barbed wires again. A camp. It was already-- the sun came out already. And we could see clearly that it was a camp. And we walked in there. It was a Ukrainian camp. And we, the girls, were very scared of them because they are a very rough people. And we were trying to keep away from them as much as we could.

OK. OK, Henny. Now, we're going to go back to when the girl pulled you back into the line. And tell me what happened from there.

So we went into this Ukrainian camp and then we heard the next morning that the Americans are coming. And then all of a sudden, we start hearing shots. We never knew if the shots is killing inmates or the American Army. But we heard shots. And the leaders of the camp started to run because they knew if the Americans are coming, they will be punished.

But they were busy with their stuff because the next morning, we saw that the leader of the camp was hanging on a high pole, his body swaying in the wind. They hung him because he was pro-Nazi. He was very cruel to the people in the camp.

And from all this walking, I was so weak that I was laying on this kind of a cot. And all of a sudden, I heard-- and I was like passed out from being very tired. And then I heard unbelievable screams. And somebody said, American is coming. An American tank came into the camp.

He walked in to our bungalow and came over to me while I was lying on this cot. And I said to him, why did you let us wait so long? And I passed out.

And of course, they left. And then we took off from there. We started-- we wanted to start a life after that, if possible. If it was possible at all to live after that. But life is stronger than everything. We had to go on.

And little by little, we got on our feet. I was called by the orchestra of the six-- of the few musicians, that they found more musicians that survived. They formed an orchestra. And we were appearing before the audiences, in front of the survivors, for years.

Let's go back a little bit to when you were in the camp and the Americans came. Do you not remember much of that because you were in such bad shape?

Completely weak. That's what I just said, that the American came. He gave everybody a piece of chocolate and he left. And the whole tank left because they were meeting somewhere. But that meant that this area was taken over by the Americans.

Can you put your purse just down there? So the tank came and left. And nobody came in to help all of you get organized? And so all of you were left there with no help. Is that right? Tell.

We tried to organize as much as we could. But we were so wiped out, we were so exhausted physically and mentally, you know, from everything that we went through, that it took a while till we got on our feet.

Did you get taken to a hospital or anything? Were brought to St. Ottilien. This was a church. That is where a lot of people were brought to be restored to health. They brought us there. The orchestra came there, the few people.

And when we came in that day, the last Germans were leaving the camp. This hospital. After that, they brought us to FÃ¼rstenfeldbruck, which is about 20 miles from St. Ottilien. And after that, all the DP camps started to form in Bavaria, in Germany.

So how long were you in St. Ottilien? And about what-- do you know what months you were there? No.

I don't remember the months, but we must have been there about two years. And we were going from camp to camp, from one DP camp to another. Every function. The first Zionist Congress, everything. Ben Gurion came to Germany. We appeared on every major political and not political happening.

As a matter of fact, in 1948, Leonard Bernstein came to Germany and heard about the orchestra. By then, we were already a bigger orchestra because they found more musicians. More of them survived. And it wasn't that big one. It was only 18 people. And Leonard Bernstein conducted the orchestra. Accompanied me on the piano. This was something to remember.

When you were back at St. Ottilien, was that sort of like a home base where you came? And then you and the orchestra went out to the DP camp?

Yes.

And did you know Rabbi Klausner? Did you run across him when he was there? He was an American.

He was in St. Ottilien? He must have been the rabbi there, then. I think so.

Tell me about the sort of day-to-day life that you had with the orchestra. Were you happy or was it just a way to pass the time while you waited to get out?

After everything that we went through, we couldn't have been happy. But we did the best of it. We cannot change things. Things that happened happened. We had to go on with life and we made the best of it.

Did you live in any of the DP camps, even just for a short time? Can you tell me what the conditions were like?

It was not a comfortable life in the DP camps. But at least they were free and they could do what they want to do. Because they had their rules and regulations, but they are allowed to do. Because it's a camp. But they had enough food. And they did some work. Everybody was assigned to a different kind of work. And everybody was waiting to get papers to immigrate.

What about looking for your family other than your sister?

My brother was killed in Kloga, which is Estonia. The most horrible camp ever. My brother, whose name, whose Hebrew name was Shimshon Zeev, and was Vladimir known to the world.

Vladimir Durmashkin was a great conductor. He was the conductor of the philharmonic orchestra in Vilna at 25 years of age. He was a child prodigy. He was on stage since he was six years old. And he was brilliant. He finished at Conservatory of Music in Vilna. Then he went to the Warsaw Conservatory.

And he started to conduct. At first, he was a fantastic pianist. But he turned to conducting because some of his fingers became like a little numb. So he turned to conducting. And he was right away assigned to be the conductor of the philharmonic. It was on a very, very high level, the Vilna Philharmonic.

And when the ghetto was liquidated, they were brought-- the men were brought to Kloga. K-L-O-G-A. And it was a terrible camp. Some people survived. It just so happened that before the Russians were coming from the East and the Americans were pushing from the West, an hour before liberation, they burned them to death. They burned them.

I think we're about to run out of film. So we'll just wait. Did you experience a feeling related to being free finally after all that time of being a prisoner? Or could you not sort that out from your losses?

I feel that with everything we went through, you know, it was very hard to be happy because we didn't have our families. And we went through so much that we couldn't even feel it 100%. Me especially. I don't know about the others. There was no outrageous happiness.

But of course, when we saw the first American, we knew that we are free. And the feeling, it takes a while to appreciate. The shock in itself of being from this camp on to freedom, it takes a while to realize that you're free. That we had to

wake up in the morning every day and think are we free? Or are we still in camp? You know, it takes a while to adjust.

What about in those months after liberation? Did you witness other people finding their families? Did you witness any things that stand out in your mind of people finding parents, or children, or brothers, or sisters who they hadn't expected to find, and they had looked and looked?

Everybody was trying to find out whether somebody survived because we were so-- you know, we were like away from our hometown. And people were from all over the country. There were very few, hardly any from the same part, from the same country or city. So it took an awful long time to find out whether somebody survived or not.

How did people do it?

We didn't have-- they tried. There was like a DP camp newspaper that came out like once a month. And they couldn't advertise it, you know. But some did. But it didn't go all over. It was just a local paper. It wasn't a huge paper. It was a little tiny paper.

But little by little, we used to hear that guess what, this and that happened. Somebody came from the same hometown. And they tried to inquire whether somebody survived. Most of the time, they didn't. But I think once or twice, I did hear that they met somebody from the family, members of the family.

Ben Gurion's visit, you remember that.

Yes.

Where were you when you-- were you at the same place that was? And which camp was it?

It was not a camp. They had it somewhere outside of a camp. And we had to travel by bus, naturally. We were constantly traveling by bus to get there. Ben Gurion was a very powerful speaker.

And after his speech, we performed. I sang Hebrew songs. The orchestra played a medley of Hebrew songs beside all the classical pieces that they usually played. And I remember once-- please cut it out. I remembered from my childhood something that I wanted to add.

OK.

Just saying, we're getting a little bit of the paper, the tissue.

Oh, yeah.

I am nervous.

It's OK.

Can you tell me about playing at the Nuremberg trials, or singing there?

While the Nazis were on trial, we were asked to come and perform in Nuremberg. As a matter of fact, I have the program here if you're interested to see. There was the media from all over the world. We're sang in striped-- we appeared in striped jackets, like the ones we wore in the camps. And after they were trying the Nazis, the concert took place.

I hear the plane. Why don't we wait for this one? Let's cut.

Five.

Tell me again how you sang and played at the Nuremberg trials.

When they were, of course, they were trying the Nazis, and after this trial was over, they asked us to perform in the big hall. There was the media from all over the world. The orchestra played. We all appeared in striped jackets with our numbers on the left side of the chest.

And I sang ghetto songs. I was very fortunate that I remembered all these words from the ghetto, where in my ghetto, these songs were written, and they became popular throughout the camps. And this is when I started to sing the songs in Yiddish. I don't know how many people understood in this huge hall in the opera house in Nuremberg. And the concert was a great success.

What was the reaction of the people on trial? Or was there any? Could you see any reaction? Do you remember anything in particular?

Just that he tried to, you know, like-- I don't remember exactly who was tried at the time that we were there. One of the ex-Nazis. And the trial was going on like in any other court, but in a huge, huge way because it was such a tremendous place. And he tried to defend himself. He couldn't.

Tell me again about the Germans who spoke to you on the death march and told you that liberation was near.

These were people from the villages that we were passing. And I'm sure that they were anti-Nazi, otherwise they wouldn't have told us. And by saying what they did, gave us a lot of courage. Because we were like in the unknown, we didn't know what is going on. And that gave us, you know, hope that maybe we will survive. We appreciated it very much.

OK. We're just about to run out. I think we only have one minute left. And I want you to sing some of your songs.

In one minute?

No, not in one minute.

Why don't we just-- why don't we all be very quiet and record room tone of the jet.

Which song?

OK. You must be almost out right there.

I can't even sing.

Yes, you can really sing.