

Interview with RENEE DUERING (Part 2) <sup>→ Continuation of Interview</sup>  
Begun on 4/8/92 (Part 1)

Holocaust Oral History Project

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Transcriber: Karen L. Grencik

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Q I'M SANDRA BENDAYAN. I'M HERE FOR PART 2 OF THE INTERVIEW WITH RENEE DUERING. WE HAVE AGAIN AS SECOND JAKE BIRNBERG.

TODAY IS THE 23RD OF APRIL 1992, AND WE LEFT OFF LAST TIME WHERE YOU WERE ABOUT TO BE ARRESTED AND TAKEN TO WESTERBORK, SO I'D LIKE IF YOU'D BEGIN TALKING ABOUT THAT EXPERIENCE BEING ARRESTED AND TAKEN TO WESTERBORK.

A Well, I had seen my parents move away in a bunch of people, a crowd, and they didn't look up where I lived. They just carried what they could. And I wanted to wait for them. Then my father-in-law grabbed me by the skirt waistline, pulled me back into the room, and said, "Are you crazy?"

But we never were picked up on that day. It was a roundup in the middle of the summer. And one day later, a family came to offer us shelter, and my father-in-law said, "I can't do that. You have two sons. They might talk." But they insisted they wouldn't talk, and my father-in-law insisted not to take advantage of this offer.

And my sister came out of her hiding place that Monday, and my father-in-law told her to go back to her hiding place, because the parents weren't there

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2 anymore. And on the next day, on Tuesday, I decided to  
3 go and maybe buy some bread next store and send it to  
4 the parents. Their destination was Westerbork. And at  
5 that moment, an alarm was for the airplanes to come over  
6 and maybe bomb there.

7

8 But it was just next door, and I didn't  
9 wear the star on my blouse. But a man who had come from  
10 across the street, the only civil person I have seen,  
11 came over and talked with me and asked me who I was and  
12 why I was on the street, and I said nothing.

12

13 Then my mother-in-law came on the balcony  
14 and said, "Oh, you forgot your papers, Renee." And he  
15 lifted up his head and said, "Do you belong here? Do  
16 you live here?" And my mother-in-law said, "Yes." I  
17 didn't want to reveal where I was.

17

18 Well, the next thing was, he said, "You be  
19 ready in 20 minutes. And where are your men?" And she  
20 told him where her husband was and my husband, her son.  
21 And they went over with walkie-talkies already, and they  
22 were arrested also.

22

23 And we were to gather in a police station  
24 in Amsterdam East, Saliastraad (phonetic), behind  
25 Lanilstraad (phonetic). And while we were waiting  
there, I walked outside. There were no guards to guard

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2 us. And the Dutch police didn't kill us. We could have  
3 just walked out of there. But we had our bundles with  
4 us, our luggage.

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6 So the luggage was there, and my  
7 mother-in-law was sitting inside. I didn't even tell  
8 her that I was outside on the street already. We  
9 went -- and then the men came. They were brought by the  
10 Germans or by the Dutch police. I can't tell that. But  
11 there were some Dutch people who cooperated in arresting  
12 the Jews, which only lately dawns on me that I was not  
13 even arrested physically by a German, but by a Dutch  
14 corroborator.

15

16 Then we were sent to the theater. There  
17 was a Jewish theater in Amsterdam East, near the zoo,  
18 which is now a -- what you call a monument, I heard. So  
19 we were sitting in that place for two days, until more  
20 people were gathered that had been forgotten at that  
21 roundup, and then we were shipped to Westerbork, where I  
22 found my parents again.

23

24 Then we were assigned to men's barracks and  
25 to women's barracks, and I had to share a bed with my  
26 mother. And my first wedding day happened to be on  
27 August the 12th in '42, and we were not yet sent away,  
28 so my husband had a room where he used to work, and he

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2 asked all his friends, "Please stay away. I have a  
3 wedding to celebrate."

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5 It was a very poor situation. And I found  
6 it now in this book here (holds book up to camera) that  
7 was written by Lara Shelley (phonetic). And Lara  
8 Shelley writes very nicely about that first wedding day  
9 I had in Westerbork. Fiasco, naturally.

9

Q WHAT HAPPENED?

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A My mother came by for that one hour that we  
11 could be alone in that room, brought a cake made of  
12 bread, that was hard like a rock, to give us something  
13 to eat, and my husband told her to leave now.

14

15 She was sitting there at the table, and he  
16 had put a flower in a vase. And he wanted to be so much  
17 alone with me and sent my mother away. And it was a sad  
18 situation.

18

Q DID YOUR MOTHER GO?

19

A Yes, she left crying. Well, we were  
20 together in Westerbork maybe three months, until we were  
21 sent to Auschwitz.

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Q WHAT WERE THE CONDITIONS LIKE IN  
23 WESTERBORK?

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A Well, I didn't see my mother a lot  
25 because -- we kind of kept the bed warm, I guess. She

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worked somewhere. I didn't know where. We didn't talk about it.

But I worked at night, on the night shift, for sewing. And I was in charge of a table of 12. We made jackets out of blankets, lumberjacks. And there was -- oh, the situation was sad, you know.

We would maybe get some hot soup in the middle of the night, but my stomach wasn't set for that, to have soup in the middle of the night. And when I came back in the early morning hours, the barracks started to be noisy, and I couldn't sleep very well. It was an unhealthy situation.

Q ABOUT HOW MANY PEOPLE WERE IN THE BARRACKS?

A I don't know. Maybe 500.

Q ALL SLEEPING IN ONE ROOM?

A Maybe 1,000. I don't know. Because the barracks were very long, and half of it was, I think, for the men and half of it for the woman. The entrance was in the middle, I think. But I can't remember the details. They also had these beds several stories high.

Q WHAT ABOUT TOILET FACILITIES?

A I can't remember that.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER THE FOOD, OTHER THAN GETTING SOUP IN THE NIGHT?

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2           A       I don't know. It was all not registered in my  
3 memory. It was not so important. The importance was  
4 when will the war be over?

5           Q       DID YOU GET TO SEE YOUR HUSBAND AT ANY  
6 OTHER TIME?

7           A       Yes. He was assigned to paint wooden toys  
8 that were designed by a person I'd recently heard about.  
9 Unfortunately, I don't know the name. A wife of  
10 somebody else designed this, and they were cut out in  
11 wood. And you call that a byproduct of wood. And then  
12 he was assigned to spray them with paint.

13                   . And I remember coming by the window where  
14 he worked, and he told me to go away. And he was  
15 wearing a mask, and he said, "Go away." And I thought  
16 that was weird because he was ashamed of what he had to  
17 do.

18           Q       OH.

19           A       He used to work on the telephone in  
20 Westerbork. Now he was assigned to this work because we  
21 came as prisoners.

22           Q       DID YOU EVER HAVE ANY OTHER TIME WHEN YOU  
23 SAW HIM DURING THAT PERIOD?

24           A       Well, we saw each other maybe once a week  
25 or so for a short moment. He lived in another barrack.

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Q DURING THAT PERIOD OF YOUR MARRIAGE, DID YOU  
EVER GET PREGNANT OR --

A No.

Q -- BY ACCIDENT OR DESIGN OR --

A No. The moment we married, we were also  
separated. He got this job in Westerbork, and with this  
job he was promised that his parents, my parents, he and  
me would be set on hold. That we were not yet to be  
picked up. And we had a stamp in our identification in  
a case not to be picked up so that we would be released  
again. But that wasn't the case at that big roundup.

Q HE GOT PICKED UP ANYWAY?

A Yes. And maybe that was the reason why  
they didn't ring the doorbell on that Sunday. And I was  
on the street. And my father-in-law said always that it  
was my fault that we were arrested, while we could have  
gone in hiding.

Q WAS YOUR MOTHER-IN-LAW WITH YOU IN THE  
BARRACK TOO IN WESTERBORK?

A I can't remember seeing her. She must have  
been assigned to another barrack, or she must have  
worked -- we had barely opportunities to talk to each  
other. I don't remember. I've seen her, but maybe only  
once or twice during that time.

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2 Q AND YOUR FATHER?

3 A My father?

4 Q DID YOU SEE HIM?

5 A Yes. He was in charge of a table that they  
6 called the drug store. He put a white table cloth. And  
7 if people had kind of, you know, complaints, what was  
8 wrong their health, he tried to help them with what was  
9 available.

10 But one day he got sick and couldn't  
11 breathe, and they carried him away on a stretcher, and I  
12 walked behind him as if he was to die. And I didn't  
13 know that he had part of his lung that was lost in the  
14 first world war, and I never saw him with an attack like  
15 that.

16 But he recuperated, came back to that table  
17 in charge, and he was called with my mother to go to  
18 Theresienstadt. And at the very end of that night where  
19 we were called, my husband and I, we were also called.  
20 And I found out recently that there were 1,005 people on  
21 that transport.

22 Now, then we were -- my husband was  
23 assigned with a white pan to take care of the sanitary  
24 department inside of the train. But he wanted to jump,  
25 and I wouldn't let him, because he had twice a broken

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And I cannot turn the clock back, but when he saw me at the train in Auschwitz last, he said, "Renee, I will never see you again. That's the end." And I said to him, "Keep on -- keep on hoping and keep your head up," maybe.

But my mother-in-law, his mother, had the same feeling that she wouldn't survive, but she did survive the end of the war, when she perished in the arms of my father-in-law near Bergen-Belsen.

And then my father-in-law had told her, "You see, you always complained. Now the war is over." And then she had a cramp, and she died in his arms. And he survived, and he recuperated. So everybody feels for himself what is to be.

Q YOU MADE A COMMENT THAT YOU COULDN'T GO BACK IN TIME. WHEN YOUR HUSBAND WANTED TO JUMP FROM THE TRAIN, YOU WOULD HAVE DONE IT DIFFERENTLY?

A Yes, I would have jumped first, like he wanted me to. He would have held me by my hands. And I was thin enough to creep through that square hole. And then he wanted to jump afterwards.

That is what -- we would have been ending up in Germany, but we would have been maybe living in

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Germany among the Germans. And who knows if a bomb would have hit us. You never know your destination.

My drive was always going to west. My feeling was going to Portugal and go on a boat and disappear. Going west. But I could never carry it out. I was always told what to do. I had no money.

That is why I'm alone now. I don't want anyone to tell me what I can do and what I have to do.

Q WERE YOUR PARENTS ON THE TRANSPORT TO THERESIENSTADT?

A We were on the same train, but they had a special compartment in the back of it. And that compartment was different looking. And when we were in a curve, we always tried to look through that hole. It had to be a curve to the right so we could see the end of that.

And in Hanover (phonetic), some terrible noise was going on in the middle of the night, and that is when they undid that last compartment. And there was a terrible mistake that my parents ended up in Bergen-Belsen instead. And they had to fight there with all these 40 people that were on the same train, ending up in Bergen-Belsen instead of Theresienstadt.

Q WHAT WERE THEY FIGHTING?

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A They were supposed to be in Theresienstadt, not in Bergen-Belsen. Bergen-Belsen was a death camp. And they were promised that in Theresienstadt was something where they could stay until the end of their life without being killed.

Q WHO WERE THEY FIGHTING? WERE THEY FIGHTING THE GERMANS?

A Yes, they were fighting the authorities.

Q THEY HAD THE NERVE TO FIGHT THE AUTHORITIES?

A Yes, as a group. And they complained from September on, until they were shipped in February 1944 to Theresienstadt. And I found that all out after the war.

Q IT SEEMS AMAZING THE GERMANS TOLERATED THEIR COMPLAINTS.

A Yes, they did, because they were people, selected people, who had awards in the first world war, who had the Iron Cross -- what you call these plaques? What you call those things that you --

Q MEDALS.

A Medals. They had medals. They were special people, and also wounded in the first world war, like my father was, when I found out that he had lost

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2 half a lung. And these people were awarded to go  
3 Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia, which was supposed to  
4 be a city, an old city, where they could live out the  
5 rest of their life.

6 But, unfortunately, they were also shipped  
7 to Auschwitz. That was 1944. First my father, and from  
8 eyewitnesses that did survive, I heard that he told my  
9 mother, "Don't come after me."

10 And they were told to build up a new camp  
11 so that the men go first and the women later. My mother  
12 was then selected in October. My father in September.  
13 And they ended up in the gas chamber.

14 I walked the dam that was to be the  
15 railroad station in Auschwitz. That was -- and when I  
16 arrived in Auschwitz in '43, in September, that was the  
17 day that my parents were on that train and ended up in  
18 Bergen-Belsen instead. So I didn't know it, but all I  
19 knew was that was wrong that this train was disconnected  
20 in Hanover.

21 Q BUT THEY GOT SENT, YOU SAID, TO  
22 THERESIENSTADT SEVERAL MONTHS LATER?

23 A Theresienstadt is farther south, you know.

24 Q BUT, I MEAN, FROM BERGEN-BELSEN, THEY THEN  
25 DID GO TO THERESIENSTADT?

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2 A Well, I said that.

3 Q RIGHT. AND WHEN YOU WERE TRAVELING TO  
4 THERESIENSTADT, WERE YOU IN A BOX CAR?

5 A Certainly. No, I?

6 Q YES.

7 A Me? In Theresienstadt?

8 Q NO, THE --

9 A We were all in box cars.

10 Q YOU WERE ALL IN BOX CARS. AND WHAT WERE  
11 THE CONDITIONS IN THE BOX CARS; DO YOU REMEMBER?

12 A Well, my memory is often refreshed by other  
13 stories that I listen to, and we had a hole for the  
14 part, what you call toilet, with a wood cover on top.  
15 And for the rest, I don't remember anything.

16 Q SO DO YOU REMEMBER YOUR ARRIVAL AT  
17 THERESIENSTADT?

18 A I was in Theresienstadt myself after the  
19 war was long over to see if my parents lived.

20 Q UH-HUH.

21 A In the meantime, I was in Auschwitz, in  
22 Ravensbruck, in Mauchof (phonetic), in Laptish  
23 (phonetic), and I walked from there to Dresdin  
24 (phonetic).

25 Q DID YOU GO TO THERESIENSTADT IN THE FIRST

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2 PLACE?

3 A I didn't.

4 Q YOU DIDN'T?

5 A We were assigned in a regular train to  
6 Auschwitz.

7 Q I UNDERSTAND.

8 A My parents went to Bergen-Belsen instead.  
9 Okay. I don't like to repeat myself.

10 MR. BIRNBERG: WERE YOUR PARENTS ON THE SAME  
11 TRAIN WITH YOU?

12 A Yes, the same train.

13 MR. BIRNBERG: HOW DID THEY END UP IN ANOTHER  
14 PLACE?

15 A It was a mistake by the Germans, because  
16 evidently they were used to send one group of people to  
17 Bergen-Belsen, and they had, as a rule, probably cut off  
18 the last train for the people that pay them some  
19 diamonds, and they went to Bergen-Belsen.

20 They were two camps in Bergen-Belsen, I  
21 heard. I was never there myself. There was a camp  
22 where they could keep their luggage, and there was a  
23 camp where they couldn't keep their luggage.

24 Those that paid a lot of money to the  
25 Germans, like jewelry or what, they had a privilege to

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2 be in that camp where they could keep their luggage, and  
3 this is where my parents-in-law ended up later on, after  
4 September. They were shipped there too.

5

6 But my parents were supposed to be shipped  
7 to Theresienstadt, and, therefore, there was a mistake  
8 in the routine. That train didn't say "Theresienstadt"  
9 outside, but it was dark in the middle of the night, and  
10 the Germans undid it in Hanover and sent it to  
11 Bergen-Belsen instead.

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MR. BIRNBERG: SO THEY DISCONNECTED ONE CAR FROM  
THE --

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A From the main train.

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MR. BIRNBERG: -- FROM THE MAIN TRAIN?

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16

AND THEN THEY SENT THAT CAR ON TO  
BERGEN-BELSEN?

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A Exactly, yes.

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Q BECAUSE AT FIRST I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU  
WERE ALL SCHEDULED TO GO TO THERESIENSTADT FROM  
WESTERBORK.

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A Me not. My parents. All the people that  
were in the first world war --

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Q I SEE.

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A -- and had special credentials.

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Q SO THERE YOU ARE, AND YOU ARRIVE AT

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2 AUSCHWITZ. CAN YOU REMEMBER YOUR ARRIVAL?

3 A Oh, yes. The doors went open. It was  
4 early in the morning. And we saw the dogs and  
5 Mr. Mengele. He wasn't introduced to us, but when I  
6 came at Block 10, in the experiment block, the other  
7 inmates said, "Did you see Dr. Mengele, the good-looking  
8 one? The one that points to the left and to the right?"  
9 And I said, "Oh, I didn't know his name." Well, that  
10 was Dr. Mengele. Yeah.

11 And my husband went to one group of young  
12 men, and I went in a group of 100 young woman. And all  
13 he asked, Mengele says, "Are you married?" And I said,  
14 "Yes." And he sorted out the 100 people for the  
15 experiment block, and we were marched into the men's  
16 camp.

17 And I never saw my husband again. I think  
18 I never saw him. If I did see him, I saw him shortly  
19 before his death, on a truck. If it was him, he was a  
20 skeleton, and I recognized the glasses. And he was  
21 staring at the window of Block 10.

22 Why that truck was in front of Block 10, I  
23 don't know. But we were in a men's camp, and they  
24 sorted out the men twice a week to go to the gas  
25 chambers.

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So when this one man stared at me, I thought retroactive that could have been him. And that day the other women didn't talk to me. Maybe they knew who he was. And didn't talk to me at all. That was the way it was. We never wanted to talk about bad news --

Q UH-HUH.

A -- to each other.

Q SO YOU WENT IMMEDIATELY TO BLOCK 10 WHEN YOU ARRIVED?

A Yes.

Q DID THEY TATOO YOU OR DO THE USUAL THINGS --

A Certainly. They tatooed us the day after, and we had to fill in some papers. And I have in this book again one picture in there about the form that we had to fill in, which most people don't even remember.

I remember they wanted to know who our relatives were that we left behind, and I don't know who would have been stupid enough to give an address. I had a sister in hiding. I didn't know her address. That was all for protecting her.

Q DO YOU STILL HAVE YOUR TATOO?

A No. I can show you where it was. Here (indicating). I wet it a little bit. And I took it off

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after carrying it for ten years. Can you see?

Here is the white spot (indicating). There was a triangle here (indicating). And there was a brown spot like those here (indicating) in that triangle.

And that was the painful thing after the operation (indicating), that this spot hurt me the most. And the mark -- I had stitches there (indicating), but they stretched. The skin came back to its normal position, and I feel as if I have a missing -- I have a dip here (indicating) in my arm.

Q UH-HUH.

A And so I took it off because I wanted to come to America and I wanted to start a new life, and I wanted not to be reminded by other people. Because I, from here, cannot see the number. It's on the outside. And other people wouldn't have to look at it and be reminded and ask me questions. I wanted to start a brand-new life.

Q I UNDERSTAND THAT.

A But I also paid my dues. I was treated like a child. I was treated like a greenhorn. And I never complained about it.

Q DO YOU WANT TO TELL WHAT YOUR NUMBER WAS?

A Yes. 65,501.

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Q AND THE TRIANGLE WAS?

A The triangle was to point down --

Q UH-HUH.

A -- which meant prisoner forever. Condemned to never been released.

Q WAS YOUR HAIR SHAVED OFF?

A Oh, yes. Our hair was either shaved or cut. And the people who did it were partly prisoners. And they did it with what they had available, with dull scissors and -- oh, those that were shaved, they were luckier, because it grew back in a nice way. But I was cut with a scissor and it was kind of uneven growing back. It looked fringy, like a broom.

Q WHAT WERE THE CONDITIONS LIKE LIVING IN THE BLOCK, AND SLEEPING, AND THE FOOD?

A Well, in that block we had a speech by the blockover, that was the head of the block of women, very masculine and strong coming on. And she would say to us, "Listen, you guys, I have been put in charge here, and you better do what I'm telling you, or else. This block is supposed to be a special block, and I want to keep this block clean, and I will punish you if you do anything wrong."

But we were assigned beds, and in the

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2 beginning, we had to share a bed. But later on, we all  
3 had our own bed. They were put together in six, two on  
4 the ground floor, and then the middle bed, and the upper  
5 bed. And so we slept in these beds.

6

And when we were experimented on, we got a  
7 sheet to lay on. And we were holding onto that sheet,  
8 if we were lucky, instead of being on the mattresses  
9 that were made out of woven paper and filled with straw.

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Q WOVEN PAPER?

11

A Woven paper. You have shoes now, they are  
12 woven paper. Don't you have cheap shoes? Yes.

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MR. BIRNBERG: RECYCLED?

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A Recycled. Recycled. I don't know. It was  
15 made of a strong kind of paper, and it looked like  
16 linen. It was an artificial -- a man-made material.

17

Q When you first went there, did you have any  
18 idea why you were going to that particular block?

19

A No way. They didn't tell us, "You're going  
20 to be experimented on." They just said, "You arrived  
21 here," and I said -- it says outside hospital,  
22 "kakenblock," (phonetic), and I'm not sick.

23

But as soon as we arrived, the other  
24 inmates that were already there, they showed us their  
25 wounds, which is also a lot of pictures in this book

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2 here. And the Greek people showed us their wounds, and  
3 I understood that we were next.

4 Q DID YOU KNOW WHAT EXPERIMENTS HAD CAUSED  
5 THESE WOUNDS AT THAT TIME?

6 A Yes, it was the X-rays that -- they put  
7 plates on them. And these X-rays would sit there for  
8 14 minutes, squares. And they would be opened, and one  
9 ovary was removed. And later on, they would remove the  
10 other one.

11 So they would not heal. These girls  
12 wouldn't heal. They would die of the wounds. It was  
13 pitiful. And the girls were never given an aspirin.

14 Everything was done here (holding up the  
15 book). And here's the figure. And this girl shows me,  
16 "Here, look at this," and she dropped her panties and  
17 showed me like an envelope.

18 And later on, if they still survived this  
19 operation -- it healed very slowly -- then they were  
20 taken again to remove the other ovary. They were sent  
21 to Berlin, I heard later on.

22 I had so many coincidences happen to me  
23 that I can just write a book of coincidences. I met a  
24 girlfriend who told me a German doctor lives upstairs in  
25 a city in Germany, and he took, where there were four

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2 apartments, the entire top floor for himself, and she  
3 would go and give -- care for the plants.

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Then he told her one day that he had to see  
5 the parts that came from the experiment block in  
6 Auschwitz that were out of our bodies. Isn't that a  
7 coincidence? Yes.

8

Q SO DID YOU -- I SUPPOSE AT THAT POINT YOU  
9 KNEW THAT THAT WAS LIKELY TO HAPPEN TO YOU NEXT TOO?

10

A No, not exactly. We were told that they  
11 would make X-rays on us, but these girls, they were  
12 exposed to 14 minutes of X-ray plates. And that was  
13 done in Birkenau.

14

They had moved, with that block, to Block  
15 10 in the men's camp because there were better hygienic  
16 conditions. They had the bathroom and the shower and  
17 toilet in the block itself. They were actually built, I  
18 think, for cazones (phonetic), for soldiers, and they  
19 use it for prisoners. I think so.

20

Q SO YOU COULD GO TO THE TOILET OR WHATEVER  
21 WHEN YOU WANTED TO?

22

A Yes. That was in that block. In Block 10  
23 I stayed most of the time of my imprisonment.

24

Q WERE YOU MENSTRUATING DURING THAT PERIOD  
25 WHEN YOU GOT --

1

2           A       We stopped all menstruating for half a  
3 year, and we all starting menstruating after half a  
4 year.

5           Q       For half a year, you mean, from Holland  
6 until -- you weren't menstruating?

7           A       No, in Auschwitz, we stopped.

8           Q       OH, YOU DID.

9           A       But it did get a little slower. Maybe it  
10 was two months apart at first. And then half a year  
11 apart. And after the war was over, it took half a year  
12 to get the menstruation again. But I can only talk for  
13 myself.

14          Q       YES. DO YOU REMEMBER, HOW WERE THE FOOD  
15 CONDITIONS IN BLOCK 10?

16          A       Yeah. We had regular tea in the morning.  
17 We were counted first at six o'clock in the morning, and  
18 then once more six at in the evening. We were counted  
19 outside of the block. Then the tea came. That was our  
20 breakfast. Then the soup came around eleven and was  
21 shared among us.

22                   There were certain people in charge that  
23 would give the people from Holland the less thicker, the  
24 thinner part, from the top. And their friends, they  
25 gave them the thicker parts. And my girlfriend in

1

2

3

4

Australia that I visited in 1987 told me that one time they took this woman by the feet and dumped her into the soup.

5

Q WHY DID THAT HAPPEN?

6

7

8

9

10

A Revenge. That woman was a Polish woman, I think. Her name was Tonga, Tonka, so -- and I don't know. They all ran away after they had her in that barrel upside down. And I never knew about it until 1987.

11

Q DO YOU KNOW WHAT SHE DID?

12

13

A She was one of the six people who grabbed her.

14

MR. BIRNBERG: WHAT DID THE WOMAN DO THAT --

15

A Oh, she gave us that soup, the thin soup.

16

Q OH, I SEE.

17

18

A She was the Soup Tonka. That was her name, Tonka. Soup Tonka.

19

Q DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT WAS IN THE SOUP?

20

21

22

23

A Yeah. There were potatoes and beans and -- whatever the people that were arrested had on them, to bring it for future food to ration. That was all taken away from everybody, and then it was put into a soup.

24

25

And we could tell from the soup where the transports came from. We had garbonzo beans at one

1

2 time, which I didn't know at all what that was. I knew  
3 what beans were. I knew what peas were. But I have  
4 never seen those big yellow peas, actually.

5

6 And they had beetles in them. And the  
7 beetles would swim on top of the soup. And we could  
8 fish them out, and if we found them -- they were all  
9 cooked, naturally. And we said, "Hey, what country do  
these come from?"

10

11 Well, these were the Hungarian transports  
12 that had come, and the food was all of a sudden a bit  
13 richer. They had brought a lot of food, so the soups  
were richer..

14

15 One woman would find a purse, a little  
16 money purse, in the soup. That was naturally hidden in  
17 the food, and came into the soup, and wasn't seen when  
18 it was dipped out. And so people were smuggling where  
19 they could and -- who knows what people found in the  
soups?

20

21 Q UH-HUH. DO YOU REMEMBER ANY OTHER FOODS  
THAT TOLD YOU WHAT COUNTRY THEY CAME FROM?

22

23 A Wait a minute. In the evening, we got a  
24 piece of bread. And with the bread in Block 10 was  
25 either a piece of cheese. That is German cheese. It's  
kind of a transparent slice, a round slice,

1

2     mansacase (phonetic).

3

Then we had one time sausage another night.

4

And then one time over the weekend we had a piece of

5

margarine and a spoonful of jam. And that was to be the

6

ration for Saturday and Sunday, so that Sundays there

7

was no giving away food, but we had half a bread then

8

instead of a quarter of a bread for those two days.

9

And whoever could trust his neighbor

10

wouldn't eat the whole thing at night but would save a

11

slice for the morning. But many of them ate the whole

12

thing at night and in the morning they only had tea.

13

And in the evening, the tea came also with the bread.

14

So if you asked about the food, that was regulated.

15

We were called to give blood. Nobody did

16

that voluntarily. And we got the soup extra that was

17

cold by then. That was saved from downstairs, from

18

these people that were in charge of food. They sure

19

knew we were going to give blood, and so they saved some

20

soup for it us. But it was cold. But we ate it to

21

replenish our blood.

22

Q       SO PEOPLE GAVE BLOOD A LOT, I PRESUME? AS

23

MUCH AS THEY COULD?

24

A       No, ma'am. No, ma'am. We were called to

25

give the blood. Nobody -- I just said we didn't

1

2 voluntarily give the blood.

3

Q BUT THEY GAVE YOU SOUP IN EXCHANGE FOR IT  
4 ANYWAY?

5

A Yes. That was their job. That was their  
6 job to give us the soup, so to keep us alive.

7

Q UH-HUH.

8

A Don't I make myself clear sometimes?  
9 Forgive me, my English is bad.

10

Q NO PROBLEM. WHAT DID YOU DO DURING THE  
11 DAYS?

12

A That's a good question. We were assigned  
13 to jobs, if possible, if there were jobs, and so that in  
14 between the experiments that they did on us we would  
15 work.

16

I would go out with a group of 30 people  
17 and pick leaves to make that tea. And that was fun.  
18 Even though we were without food all day long, it was at  
19 least something we could see the camp outside.

20

We could see the walls from the other side,  
21 and we could hear the screams from Block 11 that was  
22 next to us. Block 11 was next to Block 10, and it was a  
23 prison within the prison for males, and for women, for  
24 example, to speak with a man. And if you were caught,  
25 that was a reason to put you in the banka (phonetic),

1

2 Block 11.

3

4 I made a picture here (holding book up to  
5 camera) how the situation was. Here was Block 10  
6 (indicating) and here was the black wall where the  
7 shooting was every Thursday (indicating). Here was  
8 Block 11 where the banka was (indicating), and then was  
9 the wall of the camp.

9

10 When we walked out of the camp, we could  
11 hang out on that side of the wall, pick some leaves for  
12 tea, and hear the screams how the people were beaten in  
13 Block 11.

13

14 Also, this Block 10 had wooden closed-up  
15 windows so that we could not look outside. Then  
16 Thursdays, the people were killed there. They killed  
17 the partisans, and they killed everyone they felt like  
18 was guilty of a crime with them.

18

19 By the way, this book here (holding up to  
20 camera) just came out by Lara Shelley. Lara Shelley was  
21 in the administration, and she is a wonderful person who  
22 devoted herself to collect witnesses' statements. And  
23 she collected many more, but 20 of them printed in this  
24 book.

24

25 Anybody who wants to know about it more,  
please contact the universities and the libraries. And

1

2 Melon (phonetic) is the printer, University Press Melon,  
3 which, by the way, are much too expensive, which was  
4 something that nobody could do anything about.

5

6 But, nevertheless, the book is unusual, and  
7 I feel I'm honored because I painted those drawings  
8 about five years ago and now they are in this book and I  
9 am here to live and tell about it.

10

11 These were the experiments (indicating).  
12 This was to draw blood donation (indicating). And one  
13 day the whole thing spilled over. We had to do it  
14 again.

15

16 This was a girl that died next to me  
17 (indicating). I had diptheria, and she wanted to sit on  
18 the pot, and I had to help her lift off and on. And  
19 this doctor, she's also a witness in this book, Brevda  
20 (phonetic) we called her, she saw her die.

21

22 And I said, "Can't you do something and  
23 maybe relieve her that she could breathe? Cut her  
24 throat somewhere and let her breathe?" And she just  
25 nodded her head. She couldn't do anything for her.

26

27 This girl had already had three other  
28 diseases contagious. Now she had diptheria.

29

30 I had only diptheria. I was lucky. I was  
31 injected. My father-in-law had that side. The doctor

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came to our house one day before we lived in Amsterdam East, Amsterdam South, and the doctor came with enough injections. But there was no injection against diptheria. And, therefore, I got the diptheria. But I was spared of the other diseases.

Except I found out after the war that I contacted tuberculosis, which healed itself, and the X-rays showed many, many bad spots on the black and white X-ray negative. So the capsule T.B. is in me still. Yes.

But I was told from the doctor that 25 percent of all the people have had it once and never know. They will never know. It capsules itself. But if you are not lucky, and you are too weak, or you are under stress, if it opens up again, that's when the danger is.

And I did have twice the respit (phonetic) plate blood when I was in Israel, and I didn't know where the blood came from.

Q DO YOU THINK YOU HAD THE T.B. ALL THROUGH THE TIME IN AUSCHWITZ TOO?

A I contacted it there. I didn't have T.B. before. Because a doctor made an X-ray, and my father wanted to see the X-ray, and the doctor had a message

1

2 for my father saying, "I don't make pictures of perfect  
3 lungs."

4

5 And I found that doctor after the war, and  
6 I reminded him of that. And he didn't recognize me. He  
7 was in his eighties. And he lived outside of Amsterdam.  
8 I paid him a visit and wanted to know if he remembered  
9 me.

9

10 And he said, "No, but I can tell you again  
11 that is -- when I said, 'I don't make X-rays of healthy  
12 lungs,' that is why I didn't make an X-ray of your  
13 lung." For me, it's the proof that I did contact  
14 tuberculosis in Auschwitz.

14

Q YES.

15

16 A And in 1956 and seven, I was X-rayed in  
17 Germany, and there I was told I had had tuberculosis.  
18 And now I knew where the blood came from that I  
19 (inaudible).

19

20 I had my baby afterward. I was going to a  
21 doctor one day, and he said, "Half of your body is  
22 sterilized by injection, and the other half you should  
23 have had a child by now." With my second husband, I  
24 should have had a child.

24

25 See, here's the picture (holding book up to  
camera) -- for example, this is the injection liquid

1

2 (indicating). This is me (indicating). Here the head  
3 (indicating). Here the feet (indicating). And this is  
4 the ovary that was injected (indicating).

5 Q WELL, NOW --

6 A The other ovary was not injected at that  
7 time. And the second time when I was called twice to  
8 come down to the injection, the S.S. man didn't want to  
9 do it because there were only seven people. And the  
10 other time I was to be injected, I was called upon on a  
11 job to the music department so that I wouldn't be  
12 available to be called.

13 And, therefore, long story short, I was  
14 able to have a child, and my second husband was not able  
15 to have a child. That was the turning the tables, you  
16 call that. He was sterile. And he married me because  
17 he didn't want children, and now it was the other way  
18 around.

19 And I did everything I could. The doctor  
20 said he will not reveal who the father will be. And I  
21 said, "Just let me peek through the door and let me see  
22 the man what he looks like so I can visualize what my  
23 child will look like." And he said, "This is not  
24 ethical." And I said, "I couldn't be pregnant from a  
25 person that I never saw before." And he said, "Then do

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it your way."

I had a child from a donor that I know until this day is alive, and this donor, I thank him for make it possible that I have a child. My child was born in '54.

Q UH-HUH.

A But in the meantime, my husband divorced me, because he couldn't live with this.

Q HAVING ANOTHER PERSON IN YOUR BODY?

A No, not that. His family told me I was lying all the time. That I was sterile and that I couldn't have a child, and that their son was sterile was not true. So he slept with a lot of women, and he never had a child with any woman, I heard.

But I wanted to have a family, and a woman in Israel is not a woman if she doesn't have a child. At that time it was so.

So I didn't want to send him away because I felt he married me knowing I can't have a child, and after he put me on the street with a get (phonetic), after I was pregnant for four months, he told me over a cup of coffee, "I married you because you told me you can't have children."

And he didn't tell anybody we were

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And he didn't tell anybody we were

1

2 divorced, and he asked me not to tell anybody we were  
3 divorced. We continued our restaurant, and he went to  
4 work what he used to do building construction.

5 Q AND YOU MANAGED THE RESTAURANT?

6 A I managed the restaurant, but there wasn't  
7 much to do. And my child was born there, and she grew  
8 up the first six months there, until everything was  
9 sold. But he did not keep up his payments, and I almost  
10 starved to death.

11 Q DID YOU KNOW THAT YOU STILL HAD ONE GOOD  
12 OVARY?

13 A No, I didn't know that.

14 Q YOU DIDN'T?

15 A Until my girlfriend, Senta Cushculi  
16 (phonetic), she said, "Go to Dr. Haifitz (phonetic) with  
17 me, and he helped me." I said, "What do you compare  
18 yourself to me with?"

19 She said, "Well, I wanted to get pregnant,  
20 and I had miscarriages. And with the third pregnancy,  
21 he told me to lay down during the entire pregnancy."  
22 And, therefore, she thought that he could help me too.

23 Q UH-HUH.

24 A But my case was different, and I had to go  
25 through scraping me out, blowing me out, making an

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X-ray, which was very painful for me. And the doctor said it wouldn't hurt, but it did hurt terribly. And when he saw the X-ray, he then believed me.

And when he blew the air, I had pain on my left shoulder here (indicating) and not pain here (indicating). And that means for him that this side (indicating) was not penetrable. Therefore, this ovary was not working. The air didn't come all the way up. But here the air came up (indicating), and so he had hope. And then the X-ray was taken.

But when he saw the seed of my husband, that seed had no life. And he said, "With this man, you cannot have a child."

Q DID YOUR HUSBAND KNOW YOU WERE GOING THROUGH ALL OF THIS TO TRY TO HAVE A CHILD?

A Yes.

Q AND I PRESUME THAT HE DIDN'T APPROVE OF THAT OR --

A He one time wrote a letter to adopt a child on my wishes, but that adoption agency, I found out, in Haifa (phonetic), it never received the letter. In other words, he didn't send it off.

And after two years, when I visited the office, they said, "You can open up a file." So I

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opened up a file. And when I was pregnant by two years later of that, they wrote me a letter I could adopt a child from Yamen (phonetic).

And I was pregnant, and my brother-in-law came, and I said, "Look at this. What does it say?" I didn't know Hebrew that well. He said, "It means you can adopt a child, and it will be like a black baby, but it will be a Yamen child, a Jewish child."

And I laughed, and I said, "I don't have to anymore. I'm pregnant myself." And my brother-in-law said, "What's so funny about that?" Because they believed that I made that up, that my husband cannot have a child. It was never heard of.

MR. BIRNBERG: DID YOU KNOW WHY YOUR HUSBAND WAS STERILE?

A Well, I assume, but I cannot tell why. There are lots of men who are sterile, and they better should go to the doctor with a simple test before they put their wives through torture. That's my message.

MR. BIRNBERG: BUT HE WASN'T --

A I didn't know him before I met him, so -- he was in prison once for two weeks in Acho (phonetic), on a stone floor, cold, if that made him sterile. Or that he had too many girlfriends, if that made him

1

2 sterile. Or that he played Ping-Pong when he was a  
3 young kid in Frankfurt, if that made him sterile, that  
4 he didn't have enough sleep. I do not know this.  
5 Because that was his life. I met him when he was  
6 twenty-nine years old.

7

See, I get mad when I talk about him. He  
8 was not only sterile, he was also a crook and a thief  
9 and a liar. And he married me because I told him I  
10 couldn't have a child. But what he said to me was, "I  
11 love you anyway." And I thought I couldn't find a  
12 husband otherwise. I thought maybe there is nobody who  
13 would marry a woman who tells him she is sterilized by  
14 the Nazis, and I was afraid that I would never find  
15 anybody who loves me anyway.

16

Q YES.

17

A But when it came to the test, he was a  
18 liar.

19

Q HOW LONG WERE YOU IN BLOCK 10 BEFORE THE  
20 EXPERIMENTATION BEGAN?

21

A Oh, maybe a couple of months before it  
22 began. We arrived in September. There was October,  
23 November, I think it started. Something like that.

24

But the tatoo did hurt a lot. And standing  
25 outside every day and being punished for nothing, for --

1  
2 getting beaten on my ear here (indicating), that I came  
3 forward for something that other people did, I feel now  
4 that I was a martyr. I live like a martyr.

5 Q WHAT WAS THAT SITUATION?

6 A This woman, Margite (phonetic), she  
7 threatened us by standing all night if we wouldn't tell  
8 who put the dirty dishes on the table after we had our  
9 soup. And the women went back on their beds, and they  
10 just sat there, and they didn't feel like washing their  
11 dishes. I mean dish. There were eight bowls there.

12 And she screamed so much that I came  
13 forward and said, "Get it over with. I take them  
14 downstairs and I wash them." Because none of these  
15 people who left them there came forward. So she hit me  
16 before she knew that I wasn't guilty.

17 But that paid off later on. She was nice  
18 to me later on. I just looked her straight in the eye  
19 and I said, "I didn't do it. I just want to wash those  
20 dishes. Isn't that what it's all about?"

21 But she gave me back my shoes when they  
22 were stolen.

23 Q So you think that she had that much  
24 humanity, that she felt guilty that she did that?

25 A Oh, yes. I think that -- nobody says

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anything nice about her, but I think the eye contact that I had with her told her that I stand up for my rights.

Q And was she the only blockover, the only person who had charge of all of you there?

A Yes. In that block, she was the one. But she had assistance, naturally. There was a whole gang of people that assisted her in her work. But she was the one who would beat us. Can we make a --

(Interruption in the interview.)

Q So you were talking at the moment about the blockover, that there were aides who helped her. And I was wondering if now, in retrospect, do you think there was -- that the treatment was particularly brutal or not so brutal for this group?

A Well, everybody who was in the block didn't ask for being there. We were all interrupted, and we were all arrested one time, and displaced people. We were all prisoners, and everybody tried his own way in getting a little bit more food.

And those that were in charge of the food, they sure took advantage of their job. And we got a quarter of a bread, and I heard that the people in Birkenau got smaller portions of bread.

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So, in our block, the doctors wanted to keep us alive, and the portions were given to us like they should have been. But what they did downstairs, I think in this book is written about other stories.

Q DOWNSTAIRS IS WHERE THE EXPERIMENTS TOOK PLACE?

A Yes, downstairs were the labs where -- the department where they worked with the teeth that were from the people that had been killed. There was an X-ray room where the experiments were done on me. There was Dr. Samuel's (phonetic) room, where he inspected the female organs in the 16 times enlarged telescope, and also did the operations by cutting away one third of the uterus. And these parts were sent to Berlin, to the lab, to hold them on spirit, which I mentioned before, I think, that a doctor told about it much later in life to my girlfriend.

Q UH-HUH.

A And she told me.

Q AND YOU SAY YOU WERE THERE A FEW MONTHS, AND THEN IT BECAME YOUR TURN FOR EXPERIMENTATION?

A Yes, I was called -- my number was called, and this experiment was done on me.

Q Can you describe the whole day, as you

1

2 remember it?

3           A       Well, in the morning, after we were counted  
4 and we had our tea, our numbers were called to come  
5 downstairs. And we were waiting in line outside, and  
6 then we were brought singly into that room, put on a  
7 black glass table, which was an X-ray table. And while  
8 the liquid was pushed into our body, the X-ray machine  
9 would run so that the doctor could see what he was doing  
10 with the liquid. And this --

11           Q       (INAUDIBLE.)

12           A       Yes, ma'am. Into the uterus, into the  
13 ovary, this was as much liquid as I can remember, like a  
14 carton of milk. That much liquid was pushed into our  
15 body by force.

16                   This is -- these are the feet of mine  
17 (indicating), and because I painted this for younger  
18 people in school to have lectures maybe, I did not want  
19 to point this exactly into my sensitive spot, so I  
20 pointed it towards the ovary, where it ended up.

21                   And the ovary was filled with this liquid,  
22 which was pink and looked like pepper inside. And it  
23 was moving. It was swimming. Some kind of stuff. And  
24 I don't know whether there was lye in there. And it  
25 burned terribly for three days.

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And we were called every day to be X-rayed again to see how the liquid had traveled, and then they said, "Oh, it looks good," on one side.

But they didn't do with one injection both the ovaries, and this is why I had a child later on. And this is also why I thought I was sterilized completely, because I didn't know much about female feelings and organs because during my marriage we never had a normal sex life. Because we knew that if we would have a child, we would die because of it. They took the women with children into the gas. And my husband knew much more.

Q SO YOU CONSCIOUSLY DECIDED NOT TO HAVE A CHILD?

A In that situation, to have a child, that would have been murder for yourself and the child. So I knew nothing about female experience.

But this injection was burning so terribly. They gave us some help with a water bottle. A cold water bottle would be put on this area. And no aspirin, nothing.

And during the injection, there was no mercy. And we had to keep our mouth shut and not scream. And I was only thinking that if I would scream,

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that it would be worse maybe, and I would be sent to Birkenau, and in Birkenau they had gas chambers. So I kept my mouth shut, and I bit on my teeth during the procedure. But the pain was going on and on for a long time.

Q HOW LONG DID IT TAKE FOR THE INJECTION TO TAKE PLACE?

A The whole procedure, I cannot remember exactly. But from the calling our number and by having it done, maybe an hour or less. I can't remember the exact timing.

Q DID YOU EVER FIND OUT WHAT THE FLUID WAS?

A No, I didn't. I just know it was pink, and it looked like there was pepper inside.

Q HOW MANY TIMES DID YOU HAVE THAT INJECTION?

A Once. But they tried one more time, and that was another man. And I knew the pain now, and my uterus did not open up. And he punctured me with the point of it into my uterus time and again, just blindly, and he finally gave up and he said, "I can't find the opening." That was the second time.

And then I was called again the third time, and there was seven women standing outside, and another S.S. man was supposed to do it, and he said, "Oh, you're

only seven." And he used that as an excuse and he said, "Oh, I don't start a job unless there are ten. Go upstairs again." So I was saved that way.

And then we moved to another block with all the instruments, and they continued to work on us. And a man by the name of Otto, he was in charge of Block 1 in that camp, he said to me when I helped him with something in the block that he did -- it was a voluntary job. I just wanted to talk to a man legally for once. And he was a thief before Hitler's time. He had a green triangle. And, therefore, he was there.

And he said, "Thank you for helping me. I will never forget it. I will do something for you. I know what they're doing in this block, and I will assign you to the music group. And if you can write notes, you can write notes, then you're in the group."

And his friend was working in the department to give jobs, and my number was called, and I was in the orchestra all of a sudden. And that prevented me from being injected again.

Q I SEE. AND WHEN THIS MOVE TOOK PLACE, WERE THEY DOING THE SAME KINDS OF EXPERIMENTS ALSO?

A Once we were moved to Block 1, they continued doing experiments, and that is where I was

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saved.

Q BUT WAS IT THE SAME EXPERIMENTS?

A Yes.

Q EXACTLY THE SAME?

A They also did experiments on our skin.

They injected us with 42 injections, different kinds. I don't know what the doctor injected. It was another doctor.

He did this because he didn't want to go to the Russian front. He was a young, good-looking man, and he said we shouldn't be afraid of it. But we didn't know what he was injecting into our skin.

Q DID YOU EVER FIND THAT OUT EITHER?

A I know now what it was. He raised plants, and he took the serum from the plants, the juice, and he wanted to see the skin reacting on it. And he followed up on it, and there was his secretary next to him, writing down how the skin react on certain ingredients he injected, the next day.

Q DID THEY DO THIS TO YOU TOO?

A Yes, they did that to me. This is what I remember. Forty-two, he said.

Q DO YOU KNOW THE NAMES OF THE DOCTORS WHO WERE DOING THESE EXPERIMENTS?

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2 A I was told his name was Muunch (phonetic).

3 Q Muunch?

4 A But I thought his name was Milch  
5 (phonetic). So I'm not sure whether it was Dr. Milch or  
6 Dr. Muunch.

7 Q WHAT ABOUT THE ONE WITH THE OVARIAN --

8 A The ovarian doctor's name that was in  
9 charge, Clauberg (phonetic). But by the time I arrived  
10 he had a helper, and his name was Gurbell (phonetic).  
11 Not Gerbel (phonetic), Gurbell. He did mine.

12 But the others that came, they were  
13 professional barbers. They put them in charge, S.S.  
14 men, that used to be barbers. And the one that couldn't  
15 find the opening on me, he said, "Why am I doing this?  
16 I'm not a doctor. I'm a barber." That is why I know he  
17 was a barber. I remember these details.

18 Q OH, YES.

19 A But some details, they were not important  
20 to remember.

21 Q DID YOU AND THE OTHER WOMEN EVER TALK ABOUT  
22 WHAT WAS GOING ON AMONGST YOU?

23 A Yes, we did, in a way, if we were  
24 befriended with each other. We lived so close together  
25 that we -- we knew of each other, when we were called,

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what it meant.

Q DID YOU KNOW OF ANY OTHER EXPERIMENTS GOING ON?

A Well, they were all a little bit different. It was all about sterilization one way or the other. But my girlfriend, Lutcy, (phonetic), I found out later in Australia, where I visited her after the red cross film was done, and we talked about -- she told me about that Soup Tonga -- Tonka, Tonka.

She also told me that when she was on the table at the experimental X-ray machine, that they told her they would fertilize her. That it would be an artificial insemination. And she thought she would be made pregnant, and she believed that.

I said, "Didn't it hurt? "Yes," she said, "It hurt something terrible for a long time." And I said, "You believed that you were made pregnant in that block?" "Yes," she said, "until you told me it wasn't so."

So she lived like that, trying not to be pregnant after the war. She didn't want any children. But she was sterilized. That's another irony.

Q SO TELL ME HER NAME AGAIN. YOU SPOKE OF HER --

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A Lutcy. Lutcy Hidelmen (phonetic). And the Red Cross found her for me. And because of that, they found my correspondence very interesting, because I never gave up trying to find her.

I heard from her girlfriend that she was alive somewhere in Australia or New Zealand, and the Red Cross finally found her. I had written to them, "I'm looking for Lutcy Hineman (phonetic)," but they found her under "Hidelman." And that was her husband's name.

He died. I saw him walk away. And I told Lutcy that -- he walked away on the 26th of October, 1944, and she had given a piece of bread every day to Dr. DeVince (phonetic), who gave her husband an extra slice of bread, carried it out of the block. He came into the block with the tea in the morning, and she was downstairs to hand it to him.

And, therefore, she said to me at one point, later on in life -- we didn't see each other for 42 years -- she said, "When my husband walked out of Auschwitz, that is when I had a little bit more bread," she says to me. And I didn't know what she was doing.

And she looked out every spare minute, out of the window, and she would see him or spot him, and it was the 26th of October when he walked by in a group of

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30 people, and he would be sent to Stutthof.

And she told me -- I was standing in the window with her, and she said, "Oh, there he goes," and he took off his hat, striped clothing, and waved it. He made a fist and -- to say, "Be strong." He walked away to Stutthof and he was killed there, and she never saw him again.

But she didn't know why I remember it was the 26th of October, 1944, because I wrote down short stories about her before I found her again. Then I said to her, "That's a simple answer I can give you. Because that was my brother's birthday."

Q SHE SOUNDS LIKE SHE WAS A GREAT COMFORT TO YOU (INAUDIBLE).

A Vice versa also.

Q YES.

A And she actually met me in the room where we were, she stood always at the window, and I didn't know -- at the other end. At one time we had a shower that was between Block 1 and 2, where the shower's built. And we had to go there once a week. And some guy gave me, through the window illegally, a cigarette. She saw that.

When we came back in the block, I took that

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cigarette out of my pocket from the coat and looked at it, and she saw that. She was watching me all the time, what I would do with that cigarette.

But she came up to me slowly and said, "Renee, what are you going to do with that cigarette? I'll give you some bread for it." I said, "Oh, yeah? I won't take bread. You have to have the cigarette because I can't care less about a cigarette."

And she said, "Oh, Renee, I will never ever forget what did you for me." I said, "I didn't do anything for you. Somebody gave me a cigarette. I took it because I knew it had value. If you want it, it's yours." She couldn't get over it. I did not know she was a smoker already.

Q STILL IT WAS GREAT GENEROSITY IN THAT SITUATION.

A Yeah, I could have taken the bread. I didn't want it.

MR. BIRNBERG: (INAUDIBLE.)

A To Lutcy. I gave it to her because somebody gave it to me. It was a gift.

MR. BIRNBERG: Do you know why it was given to you?

A Maybe I was pretty. Good question.

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Because the men, they were looking while we were taking a shower. They weren't supposed to look. But there was like a wall between walls. There was an empty space where they could squeeze in, and they could look through the window, artificial window. There was no glass in there. So they could give me things.

One time I received this jackknife, a Swiss jackknife, and that was with me to the rest, that jackknife. With that jackknife I could peel beets later on in the camp, in Laptish.

And some Russian prisoner tried to steal it out of my hand, the whole bag. I had a little -- from a sleeve of a shirt I made a little bag, makeshift handbag.

And it was dark in Laptish when the bomb fell, and we were pushed out of the room. And in front of me, a woman fell into an open manhole, where the water that had busted -- the water pipe had busted.

This women fell in front of me. I felt it. I heard her scream. And I made a very big step. And at the same moment, somebody behind the door did that, tried to steal that jackknife in the bag from me. And I pulled on it real hard. All in the dark.

The Americans bombarded Laptish. That was

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the last camp with a roof over their head. But that roof was not a blessing because it was bombarded. And from there we walked, walked and walked for weeks on end in Sacsonia (phonetic).

I have a cup of coffee here.

Q DO YOU WANT TO STOP?

A No, I don't want to stop.

Q I WAS GOING TO ASK YOU ABOUT, YOU WERE SAYING THAT YOUR DAILY JOB FROM BLOCK 10 ON WAS GOING OUT TO PICK THE TEA. DO YOU KNOW WHAT KIND OF LEAVES THEY WERE?

A Yes. Some of them were blackberry leaves. Some was -- mostly it was blackberry leaves. That's what I remember it was. Because they were there all year round practically.

Not that they were the berries. When the berry time was, we didn't go there. Somebody else picked the berries.

But I remember I picked leaves to eat them on the spot, and they were the leaves off that yellow flower. What is it called? Tastes very bitter. You can make a salad out of it.

Q Dandelions?

A Dandelions. And the kids in school, when I

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2 was twice in the school here in San Francisco, they  
3 asked me, "What did you live on?" So I made a picture  
4 of dandelions here as the flower, and I made a picture  
5 of leaves, and then I made a picture of mushrooms.

6

Once in a while there was one mushroom  
7 growing, and I didn't know that I was walking on the  
8 people's ashes, and that those mushrooms were growing on  
9 top of it when I picked it. And come to think of it,  
10 that my shoes start to get yellow in the mud, and I ate  
11 the mushroom that grow on top of it.

12

Q ALSO, HOW DID YOU KNOW IF IT WAS A  
13 POISONOUS MUSHROOM OR NOT?

14

A Oh, the white ones that you buy in the  
15 store here, champignon (phonetic), yeah. That I knew.  
16 We had lots of mushrooms at home. And I pick mushrooms  
17 in Germany as a child, the filbert or -- what's the name  
18 of it, those yellow ones? Oh, I love those.

19

Q SO YOU WERE ABLE TO EAT DANDELION AND  
20 MUSHROOM TO --

21

A To substitute a vitamin. But it didn't  
22 happen too often, because practically there wasn't much  
23 growing. It was just on those occasions. For example,  
24 we went from Auschwitz on the death march, and there was  
25 snow. There was no leaves.

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3 We went in Ravensbruck, and there were  
4 everything paved. There was no leaves. But we came to  
5 Mauchof. In Mauchof, it was February. And in February,  
6 not much grows.

7

8 There was a little grass growing, and later  
9 on came a leaf that I know in German, vigorish  
10 (phonetic). That is an oval leaf. It has some strength  
11 in the legs. And that used to be good to heal wounds.  
12 When you had something on your fingers, infection, you  
13 put that leaf on.

14

15 Well, I saw that leaf growing. I picked  
16 it, and I bit into it, and it gave me a little juice.  
17 Then there was the dandelion again, very young, coming  
18 out. And it didn't happen too often during those weeks  
19 that I was there, but I always kept in mind that a green  
20 leaf is better than no leaf.

21

22 Q WERE YOU PUNISHED AT ALL IN AUSCHWITZ FOR  
23 PICKING THESE THINGS?

24

25 A No, we were supposed to pick the leaves for  
the tea.

26

27 Q UH-HUH.

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29 A But you couldn't eat that leaf. You  
30 wouldn't -- it had kind of stringy, hairy stuff on it.  
31 But there were certain leaves I could pick in between

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2 picking. But it wasn't actually any so to mention it.

3 It happened very seldom. But when the kids asked me,

4 "What was your supply of vitamins?" I answered that

5 question.

6 Q DURING ALL THAT TIME IN THE EXPERIMENTAL

7 BLOCK, WAS THERE ANY TIME WHEN YOU HAD ANY

8 LIGHTHEARTEDNESS OR FUN OR --

9 A Fun?

10 Q -- MOMENTS OF --

11 A Between us?

12 Q UH-HUH.

13 A Offhand, I cannot remember, except that  
14 when in that block -- here is a whole camp (indicating).

15 The one that we moved to is a camp where they were five  
16 blocks times four. There were 20 blocks. Those five  
17 blocks were for prisoners, and the others for S.S.

18 And the Number 1 block was not -- was the  
19 former Number 10 block. Ten in men's camp, this one  
20 (indicating), were only women prisoners here. That  
21 block got to be built a stage -- there was a stage to be  
22 built in the dining room. The other block had only  
23 sleeping rooms.

24 But because downstairs was still half of  
25 the block for experiments, and the other half was like a

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2 dining room without walls in between, and there was a  
3 stage built. And New Year's Eve, from '44 to '45, there  
4 was a stage built so to have some dancing, music,  
5 whatever.

6

And that was when the grand piano was  
7 brought in. And the grand piano then, here  
8 (indicating), was brought in in the late afternoon, and  
9 at six o'clock everybody could go upstairs to rest and  
10 be in the beds.

11

In the meantime, we did have sewing  
12 machines in the dining room also. The sewing machines,  
13 many people did have to work on.

14

I went downstairs when the S.S. was out of  
15 the block and played a piece of music that I remembered  
16 back, and then some of the prisoners came downstairs to  
17 hear that music.

18

And that was the time I talked before.  
19 That stage was built by the prisoner, and I got to  
20 notice or two, and then he made me write this music here  
21 (indicating). That was the piece of music that I heard  
22 play in his block every day, training. And when I hear  
23 that music, tears come to my eyes.

24

Q CAN YOU SING IT FOR US NOW?

25

A It was not a song. (Ms. Duerling hums.)

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2 Those are the notes.

3

Q AND AMONGST YOURSELVES, YOU, WOMEN, WHAT  
4 DID YOU TALK ABOUT, OTHER THAN THE EXPERIMENTS THAT WERE  
5 GOING ON?

6

A What we talked? That was -- there was  
7 always a tension among us. But in the very beginning,  
8 the 40 people that were in my train, we promised each  
9 other on that route for three days that we would stick  
10 together and make a friendship there in that dark train.

11

One of them was Murdur (phonetic). Her  
12 husband and my husband knew each other. And there were  
13 others where the name -- wait a minute -- Bobby. Bobby  
14 Pepper (phonetic). She was a blond, and she was  
15 gorgeous, a gorgeous woman.

16

But when she was stripped of her hair, she  
17 was standing here (indicating). I was standing there  
18 (indicating). And this woman says to me, "Oh, you have  
19 a beautiful figure." And I thought that was not fitted,  
20 because we were all naked, without hair, and we took a  
21 shower after the train ride. Who cares about a good  
22 figure or not.

23

This girl was the one I was looking for,  
24 and she stood right there, and I didn't see her, because  
25 she had blond long hair and now no hair.

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And she pointed with her hand to her shoulder, and she said, "You will always find me with this mark on my body." She had a wild growing skin here (indicating), thick, elevated. And she said every time they cut it it grew bigger and bigger. And that was funny, you know, to tell me, "You can recognize me by my mark."

But our husbands were good friends. He was also on the telephone in Westerbork. Well, those moments, they were between us. It was an irony situation.

But I have a sense of humor that I inherited. I was born in Cologne (phonetic). In Cologne, you make jokes. You are raised with jokes. And I was raised with proverbs.

And my father told me I shouldn't laugh about the jokes. I should, as a lady, as a girl, keep my mouth shut. If I would understand the jokes, I wouldn't have to laugh. I should keep it to myself. So I tried to laugh sometimes. It's healthy.

Q SO WERE YOU ABLE TO STICK TOGETHER AT ALL --

A We did. We did stick together. And this one, Galdamula (phonetic), she's not alive anymore, but

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she did survive the war. I had an interesting conversation at the beginning. She asked me, "Renee, how long will it take, the war?" I said, "Two years." And this was September '43.

And she said to me later on, after the war, that she could have hit me, because she said to herself that she could take the situation only for two months.

Well, I, myself, was very weak after two months indeed. I could barely walk the stairs. But she also remembered to tell me, she said, "I'm glad," she said, "that I survived," but she survived in Birkenau because she didn't sign that piece of paper that we had to sign when we arrived. And nobody remembers that.

We signed a piece of paper that we agreed to stay in Block 10. No matter what they were going to do to us, they didn't tell in (inaudible). But if we would stay in Block 10, we wouldn't be shipped to Birkenau, where the gas chambers were.

So I signed it, but she didn't sign it. And she heard from the other girls experiments were done for sterilization, and she didn't want to sign that, because she thought that she didn't want to be fooled around on her body.

And I thought -- that is when we parted.

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2 But our conversation went like this: She said, "Why do  
3 you think it takes two years?" And I said, "Because I  
4 have heard Hitler's voice when I was 12 years old. His  
5 voice was from a hysterical person. And he carries out  
6 what he says. And he said he will not give up. And he  
7 will not give up until his enemy's in Berlin."

8

And so it was. But she hated me for saying  
9 it takes two years. And I said to her, "Listen, my  
10 father told me about the Chinese wall. It took many,  
11 many years until the Chinese wall was completed. That  
12 was the way to defend the country against invaders. And  
13 whoever was buried during that process got a space into  
14 that wall as a graveyard. He was just material. And  
15 that's what we are standing for here. We are material.  
16 And if we get killed in the process, that's it. But if  
17 we survive," like some people did survive to see the  
18 wall completed, "those people can tell about it. And  
19 it's up to us to survive."

20

Q UH-HUH.

21

A And she shook her head. She couldn't get  
22 over it, that I pointed to two years instead of her the  
23 two months. But I was happy to see her again when she  
24 told me that in Birkenau, where she was breathing in the  
25 stench of the gas ovens, the stench of the fire of the

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2 people that were burned there, she always said she  
3 thought of me. And she was then switching her mind from  
4 two months to two years, and she thought she wants to  
5 survive, because Renee said it takes two years.

6 Q SO YOU HELPED HER?

7 A I helped her mentally. But she also told  
8 me she wanted to hit me.

9 Q UH-HUH.

10 A Well, those are moments that happened after  
11 the war.

12 Q THEY HAD YOU SIGN THE PAPER AS IF YOU WERE  
13 MAKING A DECISION?

14 A Well, that was statistically probably  
15 necessary, because the rumor went that the doctors who  
16 experimented on us needed that signature from us for  
17 legal work, and also they paid us -- they paid the Nazis  
18 50 fennig (phonetic) a day for each of us, to keep us  
19 alive, to come back to us to see the results.

20 What you're doing in laboratorium, you have  
21 your mice and your rats and whatever, you want to see  
22 that animal followed up. And I feel that I'm still  
23 being followed up until this day because I'm entitled by  
24 the new German government to have a cure once in a while  
25 when I feel down and sick. Then the Germans do pay me

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for that cure.

And I was declared 100 percent invalid after the war was over in 1957, but they gave me legally 50 percent invalidity so that I could be on the Haifafan (phonetic). That means the procedure to heal somebody. I'm still on that payroll, and I still get the cure.

I just came back from Arkansas, where I go to hot springs, and it helps, and it gets me a little bit better.

Q SO THEY HAVE LIKE MEDICAL (INAUDIBLE)?

A The medical documents have to be given to them that I'm in need of a cure. And after that, they will rent me the cure. And they will pay me back for the expenses in a certain way, in a certain amount.

And now I found the piece of document that said that I was 100 percent invalid, but they declared me legally for 50 percent invalid.

If you are below 50 percent, they wouldn't grant the cures, so they did the minimum. And I'm going back to Germany now to let them see those letters that they themselves wrote, and I will ask that question, "Why did you give me 50 percent if in this papers of the doctors it says 100 percent?"

Q HOW LONG WERE YOU IN BLOCK 1?

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A The Block 1 was the new building. Until  
Auschwitz was evacuated, the 18th of January, 1945.

Q AND WHAT WERE YOU DOING ALL THE TIME IN  
BLOCK 1?

A I went then to the music department and I  
wrote notes.

Q ALL DAY?

A Well, I also talked with Otto a lot about  
his life, why he ended up in Auschwitz.

Q UH-HUH.

A Yes.

Q HAVE YOU HAD ANY WORD AT ALL ABOUT ANY OF  
YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS?

A Yes.

Q WHAT HAVE YOU HEARD?

A One day I came out of Block 1, and there  
was a group of newcomers. I could tell the way they  
were a bit heavier than the other people. And I said,  
"Where did you come from?"

They stood in front of our Block 1. And  
they said -- well, there was a fence between, I must  
say. We were fenced in within the fences. But I could  
see through the wires, and there was a man I knew. His  
name was Caan (phonetic), Lutwish Caan (phonetic). He

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was also from Cologne. I had met him in Amsterdam often.

In fact, we had Friday night gatherings as young people, and we would dance in private homes. And that's how I knew him. He was married to a very, very distant cousin of mine, Eunice (phonetic). Edith Eunice was his wife.

Well, he was there in the group of newcomers, and I said, "Where do you come from?" And he said, "From Theresienstadt." I said, "Were my parents there?" He said, "Yes. I saw them, and they're doing fine." And so I was very happy. That was one time I heard about my parents. They were alive.

But at the same time, before that, somebody who was in Auschwitz, and I did talk with that man by hand -- may I do the alphabet? My mother taught me. And he told me, "People are coming from Theresienstadt, and they are sent right away to the gas chambers, and your parents will be among them." And I didn't want to believe it.

He was a polish man from Krakow (phonetic), Stephan Giblick (phonetic). He died two years ago. And he lived in Block 9.

Well, I could see that block from my

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2 bedroom upstairs in block 10. I taught him the  
3 following (doing sign language): A, B, C, D, E, F, G,  
4 H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, Y, X.

5

He caught on very fast with the alphabet.  
6 And I had my glasses still, so I could see his hands  
7 from a distance, and we could converse without talking.  
8 And that was a wonderful time that we had after  
9 six o'clock, when the S.S. would go.

10

And we -- he made me say every day his  
11 name, and his address in Kacau (phonetic). If the war  
12 would be over, I should go to Kacau, and then he would  
13 introduce me to his family.

14

And I have the address. And we did,  
15 indeed, write each other after the war was over, and he  
16 always said to me, with his hands, "I see you in the  
17 car's open roof, in an open car. I see you in the  
18 future now."

19

Now I have a car where I can slide open the  
20 roof a little bit, and the number for license plate is  
21 62501. But the police is driving behind me, they think  
22 I'm a police person, because only police has only  
23 numbers.

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Q DID YOU EVER MEET UP WITH THIS FELLOW  
25 THOUGH?

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A I never got to go to Kacau, but I'm going to Europe, and I could look up the address if I wanted to. I do not know if I will go to Poland. But if I would rent a car, I would find the street.

Q DID YOU EVER FEEL LIKE YOU HAD ANY ESPECIALLY KIND TREATMENT FROM ANY OF THE GERMANS OR NAZIS WHEN YOU WERE IN AUSCHWITZ?

A Well, if you think that was kind, when we were picking the leaves one day, this S.S. man who guarded us came up to me. I think his name was Fritz, like my first husband's name. He stood behind me all of a sudden and said, "Put your basket down."

And I was very eager to fill it up with leaves so if it was filled. And he put his hand in there, and it was half full. He said, "Take a rest." And I said, "Why? What's the matter?" He said he was trying to undress himself.

He took his rifle off. He put it in the grass. It was in an open clearing a little bit. And I said, "What are you up to?" And he pulled me to his body and wanted to make love to me, kiss me.

And I said to him, "Why are you doing this? You are an S.S. man. You can't do that. I am Jewish. And if I talk about it, you will be arrested."

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And then he dropped me like a hot potato  
and he said, "Well, I certainly picked you out from all  
the 30. If you don't want to, I'll find somebody else."  
And I said nothing to him. And I was hurt.  
My feelings were hurt.

Q WHY?

A Why would I want to make love in a  
situation like that to an S.S. man?

Q HOW DID YOU HAVE THE COURAGE TO CONFRONT  
HIM?

A That's the way I'm built. I have no fear.  
I can't analyze myself, but I think everybody is built  
with a certain character, and I inherited that from my  
father and my mother.

My mother would have a sense of truth, and  
hold back a little bit, be careful. My father was going  
and talk straight to the point. And I inherited both of  
those characteristics.

And then he did find somebody else. But he  
said to me, "Didn't you see the apple in your basket?"  
I said, "What apple?" He said, "When I felt your  
leaves, I also put an apple underneath so nobody would  
see it."

And I said, "Where are all the others?"

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2 He said, "I sent them away to another direction so that  
3 we could be alone." He had it all figured out.

4 And later on, he found another girl. She's  
5 my girlfriend now. We talk to each other on the phone.  
6 And he did what he wanted to do with her in a shed where  
7 we rested. And the entire shed was shaking. It was a  
8 hay shed, the loft on top.

9 And nobody said anything. And this girl,  
10 we knew her, and nobody said anything about it. There  
11 was nothing to say about it. But that was only one  
12 time.

13 He finally found another girl, who he  
14 walked off with every day when we worked for the  
15 lunchtime. We had nothing to eat. He and she walked  
16 along the river or whatever, and he did what he had to  
17 do, and nobody witnessed it. He came back with her, and  
18 that was the time when we had to break up again and  
19 work.

20 One time I went to take a bath in the Sola  
21 (phonetic), and I was missing, but nobody knew who was  
22 missing. That proves the point that I didn't have a  
23 close friend, or that they wouldn't say who was missing.

24 I came back on my own, because I remembered  
25 the story that three French girls were trying to escape

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2 in that river. They were good swimmers, but they were  
3 always shot by the S.S. And it was a tragedy. That  
4 happened before I came to Block 10. And we were told  
5 those stories by other prisoners.

6

7 So I just wanted to hit the water and take  
8 a bath. There was a little puddle, a quiet water, where  
9 I could lay like in a bathtub. Took all my clothes off  
10 so there would be no evidence that I was in the water.  
11 There was nobody around. And that was a wonderful  
12 moment for me that I like to remember.

13

14 Q SO IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU WEREN'T TERRIBLY  
15 CLOSELY GUARDED ALL THE TIME?

16

17 A We were guarded, but I took off as if I  
18 wanted to go in the bushes.

19

20 Q OH, I SEE.

21

22 A And I didn't come back for that hour.

23

24 Q WERE YOU ALL JEWISH WOMEN IN THAT --

25

26 A Yes, we were all Jewish. And you know  
27 what -- that day, I think, or another day, around that  
28 time, we had a Jewish prisoner doctor work with us, and  
29 we had at one time an S.S. guard who was 17 years old.  
30 He was from the German city of Emden (phonetic).

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32 He had shot into his hand so he wouldn't be  
33 able to use a rifle, and for punishment he was sent as a

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guard to guard us Jews. His mother had a permit to visit him. She came to see her son, and to see him meant to walk with him while he was guarding us.

Now, while we had lunchtime, and nothing to eat, the Jewish doctor talked to this woman from Emden and said, "If you go home, tell the people at home what's going on here. You saw the flames. You smell the stench like we do. You see that we are all prisoners here. Please tell the people in Germany what's going on here. The world has to know this. You are civilian. Your son has to guard Jewish women."

And she answered, "I will not do this because I will end up in prison if I tell the truth what I see. I will not talk."

There you have it. Those are moments I remember.

Q WAS THERE ANY TALK, DESIRE OR ACTING OUT OF ANY JEWISH OBSERVANCE WHILE YOU WERE THERE?

A Oh, yes. Mainly the Greek girls. The Greek girls, they knew when there was a Jewish holiday. They had their calendar built in, and they would find a candle, and they would light the candle on Friday nights.

Among them they spoke a dialect of Spanish.

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2 I detected it slowly. I didn't know Greek. But I knew  
3 Spanish. I had been in Spain when I was 13 years old.

4 And when she said, "Bella (phonetic)," she  
5 said, "Arriba la cama (phonetic)," or in German she  
6 would say (Ms. Duerling speaks in German), and then I  
7 said one day to them, I said, "Are you speaking  
8 Spanish?" "Sure, it's Castillian Spanish. And we all  
9 came from Spain to Greece, and that was at the time of  
10 the inquisition, 500 years ago." And then that way I  
11 could talk a little bit with them. I could make  
12 conversation.

13 But the Greek always were a group by  
14 themselves. They would, within themselves, stay and  
15 keep to themselves. And I think until this day -- in  
16 this book, for example, is only one Greek lady, which  
17 tells about the experiments, and I was very glad to read  
18 all this, that there was one who talked.

19 Q UH-HUH.

20 A And here, by the way, by the way, here is  
21 Ima (phonetic). This is the lady who looks like this  
22 now (indicating). When I met her in Amsterdam in a  
23 dance school, I went for ballet lessons. I was sewing  
24 all day, 12 hours a day. So that was my amusement, to  
25 be able to go and dance a little bit.

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Ima had blue eyes, very deep blue,  
beautiful blue, and she had black -- jet black hair.  
And this face, it's very beautiful, and very shy. I  
came to Auschwitz in Block 10, and she was there. She's  
one of the people that talk how she survived.

And Ima, I wrote to her. Finally we got  
together in the mail. And she said, "If you come to  
Holland, drop by." Isn't that nice?

Q (INAUDIBLE.)

A I hope so. I spent five months there, and  
I tell you the truth: I live in Daley City. The  
summers are very cold here, even though it's in  
California, and it's close to San Francisco, and it's  
hot everywhere else. But where I live, it's like  
winter. And the fog is getting to me.

And instead of staying home, I decided to  
leave, and just don't spend in my home. And I will go  
to Europe. And I will be able to travel in many  
countries because I speak several languages. And I hope  
to go to Ima and say hello.

But she was in the music department, and  
she played the flute. When I arrived there, she said to  
me, "You too?" Like here, you have someone who saw you  
before, and you are happy you see a familiar face.

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But I had never talked to her during the lessons we had.

And after the lessons, when we took off the ballet shoes, I can remember her in the dressing room. And she was a daughter of a doctor. I was one time in her home for some reason. I knew where she lived. But she wasn't home. So, to me, it was Ima from Enso (phonetic) that I knew from before.

And it was another girl, who my mother told me about, that I never had met in Amsterdam, and she said, "She would make a nice girlfriend for you." And we talk on the phone once in a while. She lives in Minneapolis. And we visit each other once in ten years.

So I met her there. But she still had her husband alive there, Margot (phonetic). And Maya (phonetic) was her name. And Margot had no eyes for me. But when her husband finally had to die, then she had time for me.

And that was at the same time that I had diptheria. I was selected to be downstairs in the sick room. And after two weeks, I seemed to be better, but I wasn't completely cured in my throat. And Margot was the one who talked to Dr. Brevda, who is also a witness in this book. She was the one who didn't cut the throat for the girl that was in need.

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Well, she said to -- Margot said to Brevda,  
"Look at Renee's throat. You want her to go upstairs,  
but she is still contagious because it isn't healed."

It takes four weeks if you have diptheria.  
And I have until this day a very thin skin where it hit  
me in my throat. In the back of my throat I had a  
blue -- greenish-blue spot.

Dr. Samuel, who was from Cologne, and  
worked as the doctor to work on ovaries, he was another  
man I heard of before I came there. And he said to me,  
"You are Ester Duering." I said, "No, I'm Renee  
Duering." "Oh," he said, "then I got you into this  
world." He helped my mother bear me.

And I knew what my birth was like, but it  
told like this: Dr. Samuel said to my father, "This is  
a breach birth, and I can save either your wife,  
concentrate to save her life, or concentrate the baby's  
life. I can't promise you anything."

And my father whistled in front of my  
mother's bed when he knew the news. But she said to  
him, "Why are you whistling when I am so much in pain?"  
But later on he told her that the doctor had told him  
one of them has to die. It was me or my mother. But  
somehow we survived, both of us, ever so heavy, you

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know.

And Dr. Samuel was now as a prisoner working for the Nazis, for himself, writing a book. So he was the doctor that I heard of. So he was another person that I heard of, so I felt kind of -- coming to the prison but somebody knew who I am. That was important to me.

Q YOU HAD SOME COMFORT IN THAT --

A Yeah. And that was the wife of the doctor who was our pediatrician, Benjamin. And I said to Dr. Samuel, "Here is Dr. Benjamin's wife." And he was very upset that she arrived there. And he told her, "I bring you an onion tomorrow."

And I didn't understand the significance of it at that time. It was about the second day that we had arrived there.

Q DID YOU THINK THAT HE TREATED YOU ANY BETTER BECAUSE OF IT?

A Yeah, I think so. He saw -- I said to him, Dr. Samuel, he was in our home, he came upstairs to see, for some reason, where that person was that he was to operate on or something, or to see Dr. Benjamin's wife. I don't know.

But I walk up to him and I said, "I have a

pain in my throat. Would you please look what it is?"  
And he opened my mouth by the window there, and he said,  
"You stay put. Don't move. Don't talk to anybody."

Well, I had caught it from someone by  
talking. Because when I came downstairs in the sick  
room that he assigned the bed for me, I was told I had  
diphtheria.

And I looked in one kind of a makeshift  
mirror, and I knew it was a greenish -- looked like a  
green fungus, fungi, you know, and it had attacked my  
throat there. But it was good that I could lay down.  
And after two weeks Margot said to Brevda, "She cannot  
go upstairs. She still has it."

And I was the case which wasn't the  
strongest case because I had been injected against other  
diseases. The other women that I met there, they were  
all from our room. We had infected each other by just  
talking to each other. And we saw each other again in  
that room.

And there was Edith Goldstein. She worked  
in Riceco (phonetic). And Riceco is half of the book  
here, about the laboratory where they grew the plants.  
And she was an engineer, and she worked in an  
engineering department. And Edith Goldstein says to me,

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Duering Page 78

2 "You too?" And she said, "I'm happy to see you, but I'm  
3 not happy."

4 And I spent four weeks in that room  
5 downstairs. And Margot was talking, saying, "She has to  
6 stay two more weeks," and that was good. And those two  
7 weeks, four weeks all together, I didn't have to stand  
8 outside. We were counted in bed.

9 And when we were counted in bed, one time a  
10 Nazi came and said, "Why are these women laying here?"  
11 And Dr. Brevda said, "Oh, they have a slight cold."

12 Q OTHERWISE --

13 A Otherwise we would have been gassed. It  
14 was a contagious disease. It was kept a secret, you  
15 know. Yes. The treatment was a pill that was red. It  
16 made the urine red. I forget the name. That was the  
17 only thing we got.

18 Q BUT YOU WERE ABLE TO REST ENOUGH TO GET  
19 WELL?

20 A Yes.

21 Q WHAT KINDS OF THINGS HELPED SUSTAIN YOU?  
22 WHAT KINDS OF THINGS? I MEAN, IT WAS -- SEEING FAMILIAR  
23 PEOPLE WAS ONE THING.

24 A Yes, that's right. And we talked a lot  
25 about politics at home. My father was a very

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intelligent man, but unfortunately he was not believing that Hitler would last that long.

Because that was his death, and my mother's, and my husband's. They always thought an assisination would happen. Well, it did, but it didn't work.

And so the hope that the Allies would come, the hope that America would help us, the hope that justice would prevail, the hope in justice. In the process, many would die. But nobody wanted to be the one that dies. We saw them die on the left and right of us. Mainly on the death march. If you had to sit down on the death march, you were shot. You better not sit down.

Q SO THERE WAS A POINT, OBVIOUSLY, YOU WERE ORDERED TO EVACUATE AUSCHWITZ NOW. WHEN WAS THAT, AND HOW DID YOU LEARN --

A Well, I said it was on the 18th of January in '45, and everybody had to leave. And those new blocks where we lived on, there was upstairs a corner with material, old garments that were given to us to repair other garments. We had sewing machines there.

And this heap of material, I figured, would be a nice place for me to hide. And I would have done

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2 it, but I was told that if I stay in the block, they  
3 will be busted, and they will be -- not bombed, explode.  
4 They would explode them. The Germans would not leave  
5 behind a building.

6

And that did not happen. If I knew that, I  
7 would have stayed in the barracks and wait until the  
8 Russians come. And they came after one week.

9

Q BUT YOU WERE ORDERED TO EVACUATE?

10

A I went on that march, and we didn't know  
11 what was ahead of us.

12

Q DID YOU HAVE FOOD AND WATER?

13

A Well, I was given one bread. I shared it  
14 with Lutcy, who didn't get any bread. Others had sugar  
15 lumps. I never saw sugar lumps before. Others had two  
16 and three breads, as much as they could carry.

17

But I didn't stand in line for the bread  
18 because Otto told me he would give me the address of his  
19 mother, so if we would evacuate, I would be in the  
20 neighborhood of Dresdin, that I could go to his mother's  
21 place. That she would take me definitely in.

22

And it happened. After many months, I did  
23 go there. I had even destroyed the address once. I  
24 thought at one point in Ravensbruck I was in the gas  
25 chamber, and I destroyed the address, thinking that this

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women's address shouldn't be on me.

I hid it in the glasses, the glasses with the holder of the glass, there was the address. Schaufenstrauser feirtish (phonetic). Number 40 Shaufenstrauser. And I lost the address.

We went to another camp in Mauchof, and in Mauchof, next to the barrack, or in the same room, in the other room, there was a group of people. And I heard some Czechish people talk to each other, and they said, "What will you do if the war is over?" And one woman says, "I go to Shaufenstrauser Feirtish." And so I had the address again. And that was his girlfriend that I never met in person.

And I was talking to Edith Goldstein, who was going to be insane from hunger, and she was delirious. She was talking about recipes. And her eyes were way up on her head.

And next to me on that mattress were these two Czechish girls, or three of them, and named that address that I had destroyed in Ravensbruck. But I had nothing to write. And I said to myself, "Schaufenstrauser Fiertish. Schaufenstrauser Fiertish is it. That is it, and it will be."

And we went to another camp in Laptish,

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2 which is closer to Dresdin. And in Laptish, what I told  
3 you, we were bombarded, and then we walked outside, and  
4 then I saw a sign in Reza (phonetic) that said, "To  
5 Dresdin, 42 kilometers."

6 And there was an open door, and I ran into  
7 that open door in the wall, and there I was free. And  
8 the war wasn't over yet. I went to Schaufenstrauser 40.  
9 I could hardly move from weakness.

10 I walked upstairs, and I said, "Hello from  
11 Otto." And the woman took me in, I told you before, and  
12 said, "What did you do that you know my son?" And I  
13 said, "I am Jewish," and she said, "That is worse."  
14 Don't tell my husband if he comes home. To be having a  
15 Jew share with us? But she didn't refuse me. She let  
16 me sleep there for about ten days. And she found a  
17 quarter for me, close to it, and I -- (interruption.)

18 Q OKAY.

19 A So Otto's mother had a different name.  
20 Shairmen (phonetic), I think. Otto -- Gerbo (phonetic)  
21 and Shairmen. She had a second husband. And he never  
22 knew I was Jewish. Only the mother.

23 But after the war was over, the Russians  
24 came slowly on the 10th of May. And I could now talk up  
25 and be myself.

Well, it took another few weeks until Otto came home to his mother, and his mother had saved all his clothing that he had when he was arrested. And that was when he was around 20-some, and now he was 40-some. And he looked like a school boy in that clothing. And I only remember him in the stripes.

So at seven in the morning, he yelled my name, "Renee," and he stood on the street. And I opened the door for him, and we embraced. And we were across each other, now me as a civilian, a free person, and he was a civilian now, out of prison, that he lived his entire life from imprisonment under the Nazis as a non-Jewish prisoner, being a thief.

And I was different. I had a bicycle now. And the firm that my father worked for, they were all in Dresdin, and they knew that I was there, and they were kind to me. So, he said to me, "Renee, I don't know about you. But you certainly changed from how I know you."

Well, we weren't supposed to speak to men, and I could speak to him in front of an S.S. man. That was okay because he was in charge of 500 men, and the S.S. man knew him. And the same S.S. man was the one who gave me that bread on the 18th of January.

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Otherwise, I wouldn't have had any bread at all on that march.

Q SO EVERYBODY DIDN'T GET EQUAL RATIONS FOR THAT MARCH?

A Oh, yes. Maybe yes. But I didn't stand in line. And it was all over when I came downstairs in the cellar, where that S.S. man was, and he said, "Don't I know you from Otto?" I said, "Yes."

But he was -- he was pointing a bayonet on his rifle towards me when I entered the room. He said, "You want bread again?" And I said, "I haven't had any bread yet." And he said, "Oh, I know you." And then he threw me a bread and said, "I don't want to see you again." That is how I got the bread. And I shared it with Lutcy.

But back to Otto. When he saw me there as a civilian, and I saw him as a civilian, it was something that made a complete different surprising impression on both of us. I saw him as that little boy that he was when he was a thief. And his mother had saved his clothing for him.

And he saw me as I was before I became a prisoner of Hitler. And I was myself again, surrounded with the business people that my father dealt with,

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supporting me morally and physically. And that was  
Bachtel (phonetic).

And they even brought me to the ship that  
brought me to Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia. And I  
learned there for the first time that the Germans were  
to be evacuated.

And there were the Germans on the ship,  
back into Czechoslovakia to get some of their belongings  
out, I think. They all had to leave that country now  
that the war was over.

And I learned for the first time that there  
were farmers, and they were sitting there for hundreds  
of years, and now I learned that maybe, because of them,  
Hitler was so sure that if he invaded Czechoslovakia,  
that the German people were on his side. And I  
understand politics better now than I ever did before  
because I lived it.

Q SO IT WAS, AGAIN, THROUGH OTTO THAT YOU GOT  
THIS PRECIOUS BREAD RATION FOR THE MARCH? I MEAN, THE  
S.S. MAN GAVE IT TO YOU, BUT IT WAS BECAUSE OF YOUR  
CONNECTION WITH OTTO?

A Well, it wasn't -- Otto could have given me  
the address of his mother another day before, when I was  
still in the music department. But when it was said

that everybody had to evacuate, he told me only, "Stay at the gate. Stay at the fence. I'll give you my mother's address then."

And why didn't he give me the address just by mouth, by word-of-mouth, when he talked to me, I could have remembered Schaufenstrauser 20 -- or 40, and write it down. But because of that, I did not stand in line for the bread.

And afterwards, I realized, when I had the address and he did come to the fence, then I could go down there, and then is when I got the bread with the bayonet.

Q BUT YOU STILL WERE GOING TO HAVE TO GO ON THE MARCH?

A Yes, we all went on the march the same day.

Q (INAUDIBLE.)

A Yes. Yes. We did.

Q DID YOU HAVE SHOES AND CLOTHING?

A My shoes were repaired by a woman who knew my mother from Cologne. She was working in the shoemakery, and she said one day, "Renee, if you have shoes that are in need of repair, give them to me." I gave them to her.

And after a week, she brought them back

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2 through the fence. There's a picture in the book of  
3 that. And she said, "Renee, I'm glad that I could do  
4 that for you."

5 And there were sewed with some old tires,  
6 worn-out tires. And they were sewed with pieces of  
7 wooden pegs. Wooden pegs. They were held together with  
8 glue and wooden pegs.

9 But on the march, it seemed that some of  
10 the wooden pegs hit my feet, and they caused my feet to  
11 freeze. Wherever the peg was hitting my skin, it became  
12 a black spot. And I suffered very much from frozen  
13 feet, and mainly those places, and the big toes. They  
14 were frozen. They were black.

15 But I never had it operated, and I massaged  
16 and had it massaged from a Belgium nurse, and she saw to  
17 it that life came back into it.

18 Q DID YOU HAVE ENOUGH WARMTH IN THE REST OF  
19 YOUR BODY?

20 A Yes, I had clothing, civil clothing, and we  
21 had to have a red stripe on the clothing, a cross on the  
22 coat. I had a navy blue dress from good woolen  
23 material. Thin, but wool. And I had a jacket, brown.

24 We had to cut out in the back a square to  
25 make stripes there in the back of our back. And I cut

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it so as if it was a buttonhole cut, and I folded the material back. I didn't make a hole in it. So if the time would come, I could put it back together. And the material was kind of fluffy, so you never could see the stitches even.

So slowly I repaired my clothing to civilian clothing by peeling off the red paint from my black coat and by folding back that little square and take out the stripes.

Q So you started out on this march from Auschwitz. Did you have any sense of where you were going?

A We all walked like an ant walk. You know, you walk and -- towards the destination of the trains. We were to be shipped from Glavets (phonetic). And there were hundreds of trains, hundreds of railroad tracks waiting for us. And there was snow in the side. I stood on the snow.

Q HOW LONG DID IT TAKE TO GET TO THE RAILROAD OR THE TRACKS?

A Three days and three nights. And then another three days and three nights in the train.

Q DID YOU SLEEP OUT ON THE GROUND WHILE YOU WERE MARCHING?

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2           A       I slept while marching.

3           Q       ON YOUR FEET?

4           A       I marched and slept. And --

5           Q       DID THEY STOP FOR SLEEPING?

6           A       We stopped two times in a shed with some  
7 farmers. They gave us a shed to rest in on the hay. Or  
8 not hay, on the floor. We didn't get anything there to  
9 drink or eat.

10          Q       HOW DID YOU TAKE CARE OF YOUR THIRST ON THE  
11 WAY? BY THE SNOW?

12          A       Nothing. There was nothing. For one  
13 week -- when I arrived in Ravensbruck, it was snowing,  
14 and I picked up the snowflakes from the shoulders of the  
15 woman that stood in front of me and stuck the snowflakes  
16 in my mouth.

17          Q       AND WHILE YOU WERE MARCHING FROM AUSCHWITZ,  
18 HOW ABOUT THE OTHER PEOPLE? WERE THEY ABLE TO COMPLETE  
19 THE MARCH ALSO?

20          A       No, not everybody. If you would sit on the  
21 side, and Lutcy was about to sit down, she would have  
22 been shot. But she found me walking there, and she  
23 said, "Renee, can I hang onto you?" And I said,  
24 "Certainly." And then I shared also that half bread,  
25 because she had no bread whatsoever. She was always in

1  
2 the back of everything. She is that slow person.

3 Q UH-HUH.

4 A Until this day, she takes it easy, and  
5 lives in peace with herself. She's ten years older than  
6 I am, and she hates me to say this. And I tell her, "Be  
7 proud of it." But because of her speed, the way she  
8 lives, she is alive.

9 But she did hang on me, and she didn't know  
10 who she hang onto until I came to Australia. And she  
11 said -- from the stories that I wrote down to her, and  
12 that I sent her before I came, she found out that it was  
13 me she did hang onto.

14 And, therefore, she was also important to  
15 me to follow her up and see how she was doing, because I  
16 felt that, because of that situation, I could help her  
17 out to keep walking.

18 Q YES.

19 A And she realizes that now. But she's a  
20 smoker still, up till this day, and this is why we can't  
21 meet again. I cannot tolerate smokers around me. Not  
22 just because of the smell, but I find out that smokers  
23 have certain characteristics. And, therefore, I stay  
24 away. I don't want any clashes, and I just am rather  
25 alone than having to put up with certain behavior.

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2           Q       UH-HUH. BUT AT THAT TIME, YOU WERE HELP TO  
3 EACH OTHER, WHEN YOU WERE --

4           A       Yes. I helped her more than she helped me.  
5 But since I didn't have any friends there, even though I  
6 knew four people from before, and the husbands that knew  
7 each other did bind between us other four people. But  
8 everybody was -- as long as we were in Block 10, by  
9 force together anyway, we tried to be nice to each  
10 other. That's all I can say.

11           Q       AND BY THE TIME YOU WERE ON YOUR MARCH, HOW  
12 WAS YOUR HEALTH? WERE YOU VERY, VERY THIN?

13           A       I was very thin naturally, but I was used  
14 to walking. I had been out to pick the leaves, and I  
15 had been trained not to have anything to eat all day.  
16 And I walked. I walked very well.

17                   And I had my own shoes back on my feet.  
18 The wooden shoes were terrible. You would slide. The  
19 snow was trampled on. It was like ice. And that is  
20 what Lutcy was in possession with, shoes of wood. And  
21 that was terrible.

22           Q       HOW DID YOU GET TO KEEP YOUR OWN SHOES ON  
23 THAT DAY?

24           A       That is a good question. I didn't keep  
25 them -- when I had diptheria, at that time, our block

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was raided. The mattresses were turned over. And there was a terrible noise on top of that sick block.

And the woman that was in charge with the bread, she took my shoes out of my mattress, because I didn't need the shoes while I was downstairs in the sick bed. And at the same time, I lost them. And when I came out of the sick room, they gave me some wooden shoes.

And one day, I saw those -- my shoes on the feet of that woman that had stolen them out of my mattress. And the Germans actually wanted all the materials that were in the mattresses hidden, but she saw my shoes, and she did steal them away in a safe spot.

Well, I talked to Margite, and I said, "Margite, I saw my shoes on the feet of her. Would you see to it that I get them back, please?" And she was the same one who had given me a hit on my -- on my ear.

That is when she looked at me and said, "Come back tonight." And she had her shoes given -- the one who had stolen them out of the mattress for herself. They didn't fit her anyway. They were too large for her. And I got my shoes back. So I could walk on my own shoes.

1

2 Q UH-HUH.

3 A That's why I could help Lutcy.

4 Q AND SO YOU WENT -- YOU SAID YOU GOT ON THE  
5 TRAIN. YOU WERE STANDING IN THE SNOW. IT WAS AN OPEN  
6 BOX CAR, I ASSUME.

7 A Yes. I stood on the snow to be able to  
8 look around. If I wouldn't stand there, I couldn't see  
9 anything. And I always want to see where I am. And I  
10 saw.

11 Q SO IT WAS LIKE A SNOW DRIFT THAT YOU --

12 A Right. I stood there. And that wasn't  
13 good for my feet.

14 Q UH-HUH.

15 A That was worse. But you can't have it all.

16 Q NO. SO YOU WENT SEVERAL DAYS IN THE OPEN  
17 BOX CAR ALSO, IT SOUNDS LIKE?

18 A Yes. We went by several concentration  
19 camps, and they all said they were filled up to  
20 capacity. Until we came to Ravensbruck, behind Berlin.  
21 And on that trip, I saw Berlin in ruins. And it was  
22 nighttime, and I saw the ruins, and I was so happy.

23 But I wasn't happy about something else.  
24 My father went often to Berlin to do business, and I  
25 always said to him, "Father, take me with you." And he

1  
2 said, "You'll see Berlin later in life, and you will  
3 enjoy it better."

4 Q ANOTHER IRONY.

5 MR. BIRNBERG: QUITE A PROPHECY AFTER ALL.

6 A Yeah.

7 Q WHEN YOU WERE ON THIS MARCH AND TOOK THE  
8 TRAIN, WERE YOU PASSING ANY OF THE TOWNSPEOPLE? DID THE  
9 CIVILIAN PEOPLE SEE YOUR CONDITION --

10 A The civilian people, when they saw us, they  
11 ran away into their homes. And at one time, some of the  
12 prisoners broke off a fence from a house that was  
13 single, standing in the -- nowhere. And the owners  
14 didn't know why they came and ripped off the fence.

15 Well, naturally, we were given some raw  
16 rice, and maybe they intended to cook the rice and had  
17 nothing to cook it with. But how do you explain that  
18 while you walk by on that farm and tell the people that  
19 we have to cook that raw rice that we were given  
20 somewhere. You couldn't eat it otherwise.

21 But I remember that one time that the owner  
22 said -- stood there helpless, seeing how that fence was  
23 ripped off, just a few pieces of wood, and said, "What's  
24 that for? For no reason. What's that for?" And we  
25 must have looked terrifying, because if people did see

1

2 us, they walked away.

3

Q DID YOU EVER EXPERIENCE ANY KINDNESS FROM  
4 THE CIVILIAN PEOPLE?

5

A Yeah, after. And in a way, a lot.  
6 Everybody wanted, first of all, to know who I was. And  
7 the war wasn't over, so I couldn't say.

8

I just said, "I was born in Cologne. My  
9 name is Renee Duering. Kramer at the time. And I was  
10 on my way to Dresdin." And they said always something  
11 that was benefitting in my situation.

12

Q SO THEY DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE JEWISH?

13

A No.

14

Q SO YOU DON'T HAVE ANY SENSE OF HOW THEY  
15 MIGHT HAVE REACTED, KNOWING THAT YOU WERE A JEWISH  
16 PRISONER?

17

A No. They thought I was a refugee that was  
18 bombed away. There was a bomb in Laptish on our camp,  
19 but the bombs always fell somewhere, and so I said I  
20 lost everything. And they always asked me why I didn't  
21 have any luggage, and I said, "The gypsies stole it from  
22 me."

23

The gypsies stole from me a piece of bread,  
24 so I put the story together that it was believable, and  
25 make myself a civilian again. The only thing I couldn't

1

2 say, that I was Jewish.

3

Q SO DURING EVEN YOUR WHOLE MARCH TO THE  
4 RAILROAD STATION FROM OVER IN AUSCHWITZ, YOU DIDN'T HAVE  
5 ANY EXCHANGES WITH ANY OF THE LOCAL FARMERS OR  
6 TOWNSPEOPLE?

7

A It was something that you cannot visualize.  
8 All these thousands -- 45,000 people, one march. If you  
9 stand still, you get shot. So there were no civilians.

10

Besides that, 45 kilometers all around  
11 Auschwitz was evacuated. There were no civilians in  
12 their own homes anymore. There was nobody in their own  
13 homes in that area. They were empty. All the Nazis had  
14 possession of it.

15

Q AND I PRESUME ON YOUR TRAIN RIDE YOU DIDN'T  
16 GET ANY FOOD OR WATER EITHER?

17

A No, not at all.

18

Q NOTHING?

19

A Nothing.

20

Q SO YOU ARRIVED -- FINALLY YOU ARRIVE IN  
21 (INAUDIBLE)?

22

A Ravensbruck first. I stayed three weeks  
23 there.

24

Q WHAT WERE THE CONDITIONS THERE?

25

A Well, it was also overcrowded, naturally.

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2 And we didn't get any food for a while either.

3 Q (INAUDIBLE.)

4 A There was a Russian woman prisoner. She  
5 hit me with a spoon with soup on my head. And I was  
6 treated that way within prisoners.

7 Q LIKE A PRISONER HIERARCHY?

8 A Yeah.

9 Q HOW LONG DID IT TAKE BEFORE YOU GOT ANY  
10 FOOD WHEN YOU GOT TO RAVENSBRUCK?

11 A About a week.

12 Q SO FOR OVER TWO WEEKS, IT WAS JUST ONE  
13 HALF -- OR, NO, A QUARTER OF BREAD?

14 A Well, I had half a bread from 18th of  
15 January till about the 24th of January. And then we had  
16 about a week or so that we got our first soup. And then  
17 that soup was hit on my head, and I didn't get any soup.  
18 Maybe in those three weeks I could have had one or twice  
19 soup. I also didn't have a vessel anymore. We had no  
20 bowls.

21 Q WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR BOWL?

22 A We left it in Auschwitz.

23 Q SO YOU MUST HAVE BEEN TERRIBLY THIN BY  
24 THEN?

25 A Yeah. And that was only the end of

1

2 January. Then came February. In Mauchof, they gave us  
3 bowls back, but the soup was just like water. And it  
4 wasn't even boiled yet. You know how unboiled soup  
5 tastes?

6 Q DID IT HAVE ANY VEGETABLES IN IT?

7 A It had white beets in it. That was about  
8 all. And I watched the Russian prisoners that went into  
9 the garbage dump, and they picked out some bones there  
10 that they sucked on. Something they could find to suck  
11 on.

12 And later on, I found a piece of bone in  
13 the field, when we walked the last days, and I did the  
14 same. I picked up a soup bone that was thrown away in  
15 there somewhere. A single bone was there on the road.  
16 And I picked it up, and I sucked on it, and it tasted  
17 like soup bone. It was dry, but I got some taste there  
18 out of it.

19 Q SOMETHING?

20 A Yeah. That was my last meal. We had the  
21 rice, but we couldn't cook it. And we picked up some  
22 old weeds that were dried up from the winter, and some  
23 of them had a match. We were four of us. One had a  
24 match. One had a vessel. One got some water from a  
25 faucet somewhere in a field. And I came with a piece

of -- from a hose, that was the place -- the thing where the air goes through, esophagus.

Q Esophagus?

A Esophagus. And it was without blood, without taste. It looked like chewing gum, transparent. And I came with that between my thumb and finger, and everybody thought I was carrying a hose, and they laughed. And we were trying to cook that with the rice.

And all of a sudden they said, "Break off. We don't stay here." And they just had made a tiny little fire from tiny little weeds. So we had to break off, and the water wasn't even warm enough yet. But we did have a sip on that water maybe. I can't remember it really.

But we -- somebody had a knife, and we cut off -- we caught this vacuum-cleaner hose looking like esophagus, and we nibbled on it. But we couldn't even chew it, it was so raw. And it tasted a little sweet.

And that was about the last time I can think of food, until I came to Dresden, where the woman gave me, in the morning, a little tiny flour porridge. Cooked flour, she gave me. And that was good, because I couldn't have eaten more.

But on the way to Dresden, somebody made me

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a sandwich and said, "Take that on your way." And I carried that bread for very long. I couldn't eat. I was dried out so much I couldn't eat.

Q DID YOU FEEL HUNGER THEN?

A No more hunger. You feel very weak. But the pain is gone.

Q WHEN YOU WERE IN RAVENSBRUCK, DID YOU HAVE ANYTHING ASSIGNED TO DO DURING THE DAY?

A Yes. I did tell about that in the other film, I think. But there was one occasion that I could go there, and I knew if there is work, there is always food. That was always the hope.

And I saw these Hungarians where we had to to fill our (inaudible), and she gave me a tiny sliver of bread and she said, "You eat it. I am old, and I will die. But you are young, you must live." Can you imagine? And that day, I got three breads. Yes.

Q WHY THREE BREADS?

A We were the younger people, and we were assigned to pick up the bread from the source where the bakery was. And they had as many breads. They would divide it towards these old people. And they took an open matash (phonetic), and four of us, one on each corner, we would walk with that bread.

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Now, we hadn't seen bread for two weeks.

And I said to my girlfriend, "We have to get one." And she lives now in Israel, and she doesn't like to be reminded of that, because the situation became very strange.

I said, "You and me, we go and pretend that we fall when we go up the steps." There were three steps to that barrack. "And then as we fall, we grab a bread. And one of us, I will grab the bread, and hide it under my black coat."

So we did that. As we walked up the steps, I grabbed the bread. And the next thing, we had to make a right turn to that room. And the S.S. woman said right away, "There is one bread missing." And she was upset about it.

But I went quickly to the bathroom with Batiya (phonetic), and when we opened the door there, there was that woman laying there on the floor, face up. Her body was so tiny, like a child's, and her head was the normal size.

And when we opened the door, the door went open against that dead body, so she must have fallen there in the bathroom, or somebody put her there.

But each time, somebody would open that

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2 door while we were in there. We squeezed our way in  
3 there and closed the door. And Batiya and I were all  
4 alone in that room just because that dead body was  
5 laying there. Everybody who tried to get in and saw the  
6 dead body retreated and didn't come in.

7

And in that time, with my knife, I cut that  
8 bread in thin slices, and disappeared the bread into the  
9 lining of the jacket, and she did the same thing, so  
10 that there was no more bread anymore that we could be  
11 caught. So that bread was divided among Batiya and me  
12 over a dead body.

13

Q WHY WERE PEOPLE NOT COMING IN THE BATHROOM  
14 FOR A DEAD BODY? THEY CERTAINLY MUST HAVE BEEN USED TO  
15 DEAD BODIES BY THEN?

16

A No, it was the Hungarian transport. These  
17 people came very late to the camps.

18

Q I SEE.

19

A And no matter if you are used to it or not,  
20 if you cannot open a door because of a dead body, you  
21 don't force your way in. And this dead body saved  
22 our -- us being caught in the process of cutting it up.

23

Q UH-HUH. WAS ANYBODY PUNISHED FOR THE LOSS  
24 OF THAT BREAD?

25

A Nobody. We were not caught. This is the

1

2 first time I reveal this story. When you say "over a  
3 dead body," that was it.

4 Q I THINK YOU MENTIONED THAT YOU HAD THREE  
5 BREADS.

6 A Yes. The same day, I came back from work,  
7 and there was a big line standing on the outside. And  
8 because we had come from work, we wanted to go inside  
9 already. And we just moved into that line.

10 But we actually moved into the front of the  
11 line, and the S.S. woman said, "Somebody just jumped  
12 into the line." And by the time she said it, we were  
13 already gone through the door. And at the door, we were  
14 given a bread. That was the ration for those that  
15 stayed behind.

16 And then Lutcy didn't get a bread again.  
17 And she cried and she said, "Renee, I was at the end of  
18 the line. I didn't get a bread." And I said, "Don't  
19 worry about it. I have enough for both of us."

20 Q SO THAT WAS YOUR SECOND BREAD?

21 A Yeah.

22 Q AND WHERE DID THE THIRD ONE COME FROM?

23 A Maybe it was two breads. But the one  
24 bread, we shared. Maybe I'm thinking of three half  
25 breads. That were big enough to think of breads.

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2 Q IN ANY CASE, A MIRACLE HAPPENED?

3 A A miracle happened.

4 MR. BIRNBERG: THAT WAS A LOT OF BREAD.

5 A That was a lot of bread. One and a half  
6 bread.

7 Q WHAT ABOUT THE BARRACKS, WAS THAT SIMILAR  
8 TO THE AUSCHWITZ BARRACKS?

9 A No, not at all. No. In Auschwitz I was in  
10 blocks, with six two-story buildings, stone buildings.  
11 But these were wooden buildings. And the one I was in  
12 was called the tent, because the roof was made out of a  
13 tent. It had wooden walls. They were collapsible.

14 It had one window that had no glass in it,  
15 and when I came that night, the first night, with Lutcy  
16 into the tent, we stood by the window instead of taking  
17 a bed. I didn't know there were going to be a thousand  
18 people in there. And we had no bed. We stood at the  
19 window all night, after we were on the march for one  
20 week.

21 And when we survived that night, I started  
22 to be already delirious. I saw S.S. men across. I saw  
23 myself stepping out of that window, walking through the  
24 camp. I saw myself getting out of my body kind of  
25 experience. And when the morning came, we said to each

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2 other, "Now that we survived that night, Lutcy, we will  
3 survive."

4 Q YOU DREW STRENGTH FROM THAT?

5 A Yeah.

6 Q DID YOU FIND SLEEPING SPACE FOR YOURSELF  
7 THEN?

8 A Well, they had to share with us. We were  
9 four in one bed. And sometimes the wooden planks would  
10 break and we would fall on the people below us. And  
11 they would holler and scream.

12 Q WHAT ABOUT TOILET FACILITIES?

13 A I knew you were going to ask that. Since  
14 we didn't have a lot to eat, we didn't have to go a lot  
15 to the toilet. We were dried out. And if we had to go,  
16 it was in a separate barrack. It was like you could  
17 overlook the room with holes there in the wood, yes.

18 Q AND COULD YOU --

19 A And that was the way it was in Westerbork.

20 Q UH-HUH.

21 A My mother had a name for those. She called  
22 it, in Westerbork, eggholders. It was like the  
23 old-fashion eggholders, when you had the round holes in  
24 wood. So I didn't know what she was talking about. But  
25 now that you ask me before, I can answer that, yes. We

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had separate barracks just for toilets.

Q AND DID YOU HAVE WATER WHERE YOU COULD WASH  
IN RAVENSBRUCK?

A That was at the same facilities. There  
were some pipes running that you could open up and wash.

Q HOW ABOUT LICE AND THOSE KINDS OF PROBLEMS  
IN THE CAMPS?

A Well, we had to start combing our hair a  
lot and checking each other, and Lutcy became full with  
lice in Mauchof. That was the next camp. And Lutcy had  
a contagious disease there. She was high with fever.  
And we were holding her up between us when we were  
counted.

And one day, she was gone. And I didn't  
know what happened. But I found out now that she was  
put in a bed so she wouldn't have to stand up at all.  
And she survived the liberation there, in that camp.  
But I was sent on and on.

Q DO YOU THINK SHE HAD TYPHUS?

A Yes, she had typhus. Yes.

Q DID YOU EVER GET TYPHUS?

A No, I was injected against typhus.

Q SO YOU SAID ONE JOB YOU HAD AT RAVENSBRUCK  
WAS GETTING BREAD. BUT DID YOU HAVE A DAILY JOB?

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2           A       No, that was a one-time job. And I didn't  
3 wear any pants anymore, panties. They were stolen. Not  
4 from my body, but I tried to wash them and hang them up,  
5 and I turned around, they were gone. And I was without  
6 panties, but I still was wearing my dress and my coat  
7 and my jacket. And at one time I took a piece of snow  
8 and washed myself.

9           Q       UH-HUH.

10          A       That was very refreshing.

11          Q       AND THE SAME NAZIS WHO HAD TAKEN YOU TO  
12 RAVENSBRUCK, WERE THEY STILL GUARDING YOU, OR WAS IT A  
13 DIFFERENT GROUP?

14          A       Well, I cannot tell if they were different  
15 or not.

16          Q       HOW WAS THE TREATMENT THEN FROM THAT POINT?

17          A       The treatment, they had to do a job. And  
18 they were tough. But in Ravensbruck, I can't remember  
19 any treatment. We just passed the time.

20          Q       SO THEY SOUND LIKE THEY WEREN'T OVERLY  
21 BRUTAL TO YOU IN RAVENSBRUCK?

22          A       Personally, I was never hit by a Nazi woman  
23 or Nazi man, except I was picked by Mengele to be in the  
24 experiment block. But I was hit by another prisoner,  
25 and I was hit by a Russian prisoner.

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2           Q       Aside from the one Nazi soldier who wanted  
3 to make love with you, were any of you or your  
4 companions ever used sexually?

5           A       Yeah. I said that one of them had to hold  
6 still when the whole shed was wiggling, and then he  
7 found this other girl. She was from France. And --

8           Q       WAS THAT THE ONLY INSTANCE THAT YOU CAN --

9           A       We all knew that he did that with us. And  
10 I said, "No." But he picked me first, he said, and if I  
11 didn't want it, that was my thing.

12          Q       DO YOU KNOW IF ANY BABIES WERE BORN?

13          A       No babies.

14          Q       NO.

15          A       In contrary, we had four women that came  
16 with our transport out of the 100 who were pregnant, and  
17 Dr. Samuel called them right away and removed the fetus  
18 so that they would survive.

19                 Because they did have a case in the block  
20 before we came where a woman was pregnant, and they made  
21 that child be born, and then the next thing you know  
22 they took the woman and the baby and put them in the gas  
23 chamber.

24          Q       DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHY THEY CHOSE MARRIED  
25 WOMAN ONLY FOR THIS EXPERIMENT?

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2           A       That was probably so that we would hold  
3 still on that table. That we had some kind of  
4 introduction to sexual awareness. My opinion.

5                   But the Greek girls were not even allowed  
6 to have that before they came to the camp. They just  
7 got married to each other because it was customary. And  
8 when they were asked were they married, they said,  
9 "Yes."

10           Q       IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE THAT YOU CAN THINK  
11 OF AT THIS MOMENT YOU'D LIKE TO ADD ABOUT THE  
12 RAVENSBRUCK CAMP?

13           A       No.

14           Q       WELL, THEN, WE'LL STOP NOW.

15           A       Okay.

16           Q       THANK YOU. JAKE MAY HAVE SOME QUESTIONS HE  
17 WOULD LIKE TO ASK.

18           MR. BIRNBERG: YES. YOU SAID THAT OTTO WAS THE  
19 ONE WHO KIND OF GOT YOU OUT OF THE EXPERIMENTATION. AND  
20 DID I HEAR CORRECTLY, DID YOU SAY THAT YOU HAD DONE  
21 SOMETHING FOR HIM AND HE WAS DOING THIS FOR YOU?

22           A       Yes, that's right.

23           MR. BIRNBERG: WHAT WAS IT THAT YOU DID FOR HIM?

24           A       That's right. I said in our block was room  
25 to build a stage, and on that stage was supposed to be

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2 performances. And there was a need to sew on rings on  
3 the curtain.

4

And nobody of the Dutch prisoners, or any  
5 other prisoners in the block, wanted to help this guy  
6 because he was wearing a green triangle, which meant he  
7 was a German, and he was a thief before.

8

And he never expected the women to reject  
9 him because he didn't see himself that way. He was in a  
10 high position. And there was this rebellion against  
11 him.

12

And I felt that if nobody wanted to help  
13 him, what is in it for me? I am a dressmaker. I can  
14 sew. I can help him put the rings on. And at the same  
15 time, I can legally talk with a man, which was a  
16 different thing after not talking with a man for a long  
17 time. It was against the law. I could talk with him  
18 and see.

19

I didn't even expect him to talk to me.  
20 But he wanted -- the first question was, "Why do these  
21 women refuse to help me? I'm building a stage for them.  
22 I'm in charge of the entertainment. And they don't seem  
23 to realize that."

24

And I said, "I cannot tell you, other than  
25 that the Dutch people are very stubborn people, and they

1

2 know who you are from your number and from your  
3 triangle."

4 The truth. Always the truth. That is how  
5 I got together with Otto.

6 MR. BIRNBERG: IT SEEMS THAT THAT WAS VERY GOOD  
7 FOR YOU. THAT WAS IN BLOCK 1 (INAUDIBLE); RIGHT?

8 A Yes.

9 MR. BIRNBERG: SO HOW LONG WERE YOU IN BLOCK 10,  
10 AND THEN WHEN DID YOU -- WHEN YOU MOVED TO BLOCK 1, HOW  
11 LONG WERE YOU IN BLOCK 1 BEFORE OTTO TOOK YOU OUT OF  
12 THERE? OR DID HE REALLY TAKE YOU OUT OF THERE?

13 A I slept in that block. I kept sleeping  
14 there. But it was only for a short time between the end  
15 of 1944 until we marched away. That was a couple of  
16 three months or so. No more.

17 MR. BIRNBERG: UH-HUH.

18 A Because we were in Block 10, and when they  
19 moved with the entire block to Block 1, maybe we stayed  
20 there for a year or so in Block 10 until we moved to  
21 Block 1.

22 MR. BIRNBERG: ABOUT HOW MANY PEOPLE WERE IN  
23 BLOCK 10? HOW LONG HAD THE --

24 A Well, what I'm reading now is below 500  
25 people. And not all 500 were experimented on.

1

2 Q WAS THAT AT ONE TIME?

3 A No. This block was filled slowly, every  
4 week 100, until it was full.

5 Q WHAT WAS --

6 A Before that it was Birkenau, experiment  
7 block, and I don't know the number of that block. But  
8 there is testimony given in this book that I showed  
9 before, the criminal experiments done on human beings in  
10 Auschwitz by Lara Shelley.

11 There are witnesses there that talk about  
12 that they worked in that experimental block in Birkenau.  
13 It's near Auschwitz. It's a manmade camp built in the  
14 mud, a muddy area, drenched in the winter. And it  
15 wasn't the ideal situation for those doctors, so the  
16 doctors requested another place.

17 Then they emptied a block for that  
18 experimental work to be Block Number 10, and that was  
19 Auschwitz -- called Auschwitz Number 1. That's the old  
20 Auschwitz, the original Auschwitz camp, like a cazione,  
21 like for soldiers, where there was room for 500 people  
22 comfortably.

23 But we were put upstairs, 200 in each room.  
24 And downstairs were some others that worked there. And  
25 the rest was sick rooms downstairs.

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But each of these blocks did carry 500 prisoners for men, because the downstairs rooms were also for prisoners in the other blocks.

Q NOW, THE DOWNSTAIRS ROOMS, THAT'S WHERE THEY CARRIED ON THE EXPERIMENTS?

A Yes.

Q That's also where you stayed when you were sick?

A Yes, one of the rooms.

Q SO THE DOWNSTAIRS, WHEN YOU TALK ABOUT "DOWNSTAIRS," THAT WAS A SEPARATED PLACE WHERE THERE WERE SEVERAL ROOMS?

A Right. But the upstairs, the stairs in the middle, you go upstairs. The entrance towards the street. Long hallway. And upstairs was left or right from the middle stairs.

But we also had a loft where the leaves were dried, the leaves that we picked. And that loft was made out of beams. And in between the beams were the leaves.

If you had to walk up there by chance, you could not step on the ceiling. It was the ceiling, you know. But you could step only on the beams. And the leaves were spread out on the other parts to dry. Yes.

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There was an old woman, Mrs. Dewitt

(phonetic), a Dutch woman, she was in charge there, and

she did nothing else but cut up the dried leaves. And

her hands were terribly bulky, knotted, from the

scissors that weren't sharp anymore.

I saw her. And she was old then. I don't

know how she could have survived the march. I remember

her name, Dewitt. And she was wearing a black dress all

the time.

Q YOU SAID THERE WAS A DR. SAMUEL, AND THEN

ANOTHER WOMAN WHO WAS THE WIFE OF ANOTHER DOCTOR?

A Dr. Benjamin's wife, yeah. They know each

other. They were befriended in Cologne, where I was

born.

Q AND WHEN HE WENT AWAY AFTER HE LEARNED WHO

SHE WAS, HE SAID HE'D BRING HER AN ONION?

A Yes.

Q AND YOU DIDN'T UNDERSTAND AT THE TIME THE

SIGNIFICANCE?

A Right.

Q WHAT WAS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THAT?

A Well, it was forbidden to have anything on

the side, of course. If he got an onion, it was illegal

to have an onion. And he got it from somewhere else.

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And I didn't know that in the evening, when the S.S. was gone, I learned only now from the books and from other stories that there was like a marketplace where the people would trade things.

And they would steal the onions and other things from the kitchen which were not in our food. They deprived us from the food by stealing. Then they would switch things.

Like, for example, if somebody was a smoker, he would go and steal an onion, and he would get a cigarette for an onion. There was no money. It was trading. It was stealing and trading.

And he wanted to do that for her, and it was risky for him to carry an onion. If he would have been caught with an onion, he would have been ending up in banca and be beaten up for two weeks.

Q DID YOU OR ANY OF YOUR ACQUAINTANCES THERE PARTICIPATE IN ANY OF THIS TRADING?

A Not that I know of. But I know that, for example, the people that brought us the soup, they always carried something on them to bring it into the block. We were completely helpless. We never did get out of the block. So we were dependent on the goodwill of the other prisoners to bring us something.

1                   And they brought us old sweaters, that had  
2   been disinfected maybe, but they had holes in the elbows  
3   and holes in the bodies. And we would rip them apart,  
4   take out the bad pieces of wool, the thin worn-out  
5   pieces, knot it together again.

6                   And I found a piece of wire one day on the  
7   street where we walked in the very beginning, and I saw  
8   in that wire a possibility for knitting needles. So I  
9   ran out of the line, which was a risk to be punished,  
10   and I picked up that wire, and made four pieces out of  
11   it.

12                  Then the four pieces, I gave it to those  
13   that had wool, and I was rewarded once in a while. They  
14   were nice to me, that they could knit that wool now  
15   because I picked up the wire. They made gloves and  
16   socks for the men. See, that's what they probably  
17   expected us to do, to knit, from the wool, socks, so  
18   they had something on their feet.

19                  And what other people's experience is, I  
20   don't know. But I help sometimes knit a sock or knit on  
21   a glove. Because those two sisters that knew my mother  
22   from way back when they were children, they had the two  
23   beds on top, and I could sit with them sometimes.

24                  Anybody who had a bed on top of the  
25   three-story beds was fortunate because they could

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2 stretch out their back and they could stretch out their  
3 head. While the others, who had beds below, could never  
4 stretch out and never sit on the bed properly.

5

MR. BIRNBERG: WAS THAT BECAUSE --

6

A Of the narrowness. Space. There was no  
7 space. So if you had a friend who had a bed on the  
8 third-floor bed, that is where you would hang out. And  
9 the girls that got my needles were older than myself,  
10 and they knew my mother, so that they were nice to me  
11 and let me come up there.

12

MR. BIRNBERG: AND IN RAVENSBRUCK, YOU WERE HIT,  
13 I GUESS -- YOU SAID YOU WERE HIT --

14

A Ravensbruck?

15

MR. BIRNBERG: Yes?

16

A For the first time, the soup came --

17

MR. BIRNBERG: UH-HUH.

18

A -- I think somebody gave me a cup to hold  
19 it up. And others had a bowl. And the ladle was larger  
20 than the cup. Maybe she did -- she saw my face. She  
21 saw my little cup. And instead of pouring the soup into  
22 the cup, she would hit the ladle on top of my head, and  
23 the soup would pour over my face. Is that understood?

24

MR. BIRNBERG: YES.

25

A Can you visualize that? Can you visualize

1

2 that?

3

MR. BIRNBERG: I'M JUST TRYING TO UNDERSTAND

4

WHY --

5

A Out of no reason. She was a Russian. She was Russian and not Jewish. The Russians always hated the Jews. It seems to me that is antisemitism.

8

MR. BIRNBERG: SHE WASN'T JEWISH?

9

A The Russians were taken to prison for other reasons that I didn't know then, because they were maybe fighting the Germans, and they were the enemies, and so they were also take into concentration camps.

13

We had all kinds of people in the concentration camps, but I never met them until we were evacuated, because we were, the 500 of us, in one block all the time. The first time I saw others was on the march.

18

And already I met Russians in the train. We had to share the train among 60 people. I was standing in the corner on the snow. That was my choice. And the Russians sat in the middle of the train. This is their part. And there were 20 of them. And the other 40 of us had to be in another half of the train. Now, is that -- is that even divided? No, it is not.

25

Forty people had to stand up, like herrings

1  
2 standing up, and 20 people were laying on the floor like  
3 herrings, and kept each other warm in a horizontal  
4 position. And that is what the Russians were doing to  
5 us prisoners.

6 I can only talk for my compartment. I  
7 cannot talk for the others.

8 MR. BIRNBERG: I DIDN'T REALIZE THAT THE RUSSIAN  
9 WOMAN WASN'T JEWISH, BECAUSE THERE WERE RUSSIAN JEWS,  
10 AND I THOUGHT --

11 A I met a lot of other Christian people later  
12 on. They were in prison because they had an affair with  
13 a Polish worker. The German men were taken out of their  
14 position to be soldiers in Austria.

15 For example, Polish people who were not  
16 Jewish were sent away from their Polish homes.  
17 Everybody was displaced. They were sent into the  
18 villages of Austria, and they were a shoemaker. And  
19 there were other people that were needed.

20 So these Christian women were put in prison  
21 because they talked to them, or they had a love affair  
22 with that shoemaker who was a Polish worker. That was  
23 not allowed. That wasn't legal.

24 And that is why I met Annie. Annie is now  
25 dead. But Annie told me her story. She did become

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pregnant from this Polish worker, and, therefore, she  
was put in prison. And from prison she was sent to  
Auschwitz. And she was not Jewish.

Hitler was a terrible man. Deliberately he  
took to do with people as he pleased. It's until this  
day not yet understood. And it is about time that  
people do understand that, under pressure, without  
opposition, these things did happen.

And I think this is the ending.

-- 00000 --