This interview was recorded April 15, 1980 for the Oral History Committee of the Holocaust Library and Research Center Associates of San Francisco.

Interviewee: Mrs. Lotte Grunwald, a German Jew, survivor

Interviewer: Monica Frankel

Q: MRS. GRUNWALD, YOU WERE LIVING IN FRANKFURT, GERMANY, YOU SAID, IN 1933 WHEN HITLER AND THE NAZIS CAME TO POWER. WHAT WAS GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE AT THE TIME?

A: April 1, 1933, I was still going to school. My father, who was a businessman, decided he wanted to leave. My mother, who had her parents in the city, didn't want to, so he left her alone, because at that time, one thought if anything would happen at all, it would affect only men. As it turned out, that was a fact in the beginning--that only men were taken to camps like Buchenwald and Dahcau, never women. But after a few days, when nothing happened, my father came back and continued his business, which was a Jewish business.

Q: WHAT WAS HIS BUSINESS?

A: He manufactured wholesale and retail groceries. It's different from businesses here, but he manufactured kosher articles, like cheese and butter and things.

Q: SO HIS CLIENTELE WAS MOSTLY JEWISH?

A: I didn't know any non-Jewish person outside of out superintendent in the house where we lived. It was an apartment house, and this man who lived on the upper floor did the central heating and this kind of work. But it was the only non-Jew I knew. My parents had no non-Jewish friends, nothing. We didn't live in a ghetto, and still the Jews had only contact with Jews. I came out of a very Orthodox family; there was synagogue and there was whatever connected with it, but not anybody outside of that circle. I went to an orthodox school, and the people I went to school with were all Jewish.

Q: WHAT LEVEL OF SCHOOL WERE YOU AT IN 1933?

A: In 1933, I was what you call here a junior. I did not continue through senior, but I went to business school instead. In 1933 in the city, you didn't notice too much, but you knew and you heard that in the smaller places the Germans harrassed Jews. Poor people from smaller places moved into the city. You knew that we personally had nothing to suffer from-- any Nazi movement-- certainly not in '33, '34, and '35. Maybe in '36, one was thinking of leaving, at least my family was. In 1937, my father decided to leave. The way we left: We just took our suitcases and went on a train and left for, at the time, Belgium. We left our belongings in the house. Later only did we get our belongings out. It was without any difficulty; it was just like moving from one place to the other. It was a moving van that went from Frankfurt to Amsterdam.

Q: THERE WAS NOTHING SPECIFICALLY WRONG IN '37?

A: Nothing specifically, and even before-- I remember this clearly-- from Frankfurt to Amsterdam, or Frankfurt to Brussels, or Frankfurt to Paris, were all rather short distances so that the family's silver, for instance, went out in suitcases out of the country. Nobody bothered about it. That was before '37, I would say, Also, one heard all the time from smaller places that men were brought into concentration camps, Dachau and these well-known camps-- Buchenwald; but not so much from the cities-- Berlin and Frankfurt and Hamburg and Munich. They did not right away start with the cities, because-- it probably had to do with foreign countries: they did not want to draw their attention too much on what they were doing or preparing. In smaller towns, the word didn't get around, so most of these people came from smaller places. In 1937, we left and lived from then on in Holland, where a number of German Jews had immigrated to. It was a very free country. One was concerned with what was going on in Germany, but since Holland was unoccupied, neutral, one had the wrong idea that Hitler would do the same.

Q: DID YOU LIVE IN A NEIGHBORHOOD OR IN A GHETTO IN AMSTERDAM? DID YOU LIVE WITH YOUR FELLOW GERMAN JEWS?

A: No, not at all. Although there were a number of German Jews, Holland was not that easy to get in. You had to have some money in order, because you were not allowed to work; you had to prove that you had money to sustain yourself without working.

Q: WERE YOU NOT ALLOWED TO WORK BECAUSE YOU WERE IMMIGRANTS?

A: Yes. We were not allowed to work paid or unpaid. You couldn't even do any voluntary work. Every three months we had to go to the police; it was not harrassment towards us so much, but there were laws, and these laws existed for some time. Everybody was happy just to be admitted and went to the police and got their stamp in their passport and took this. Otherwise, life was-- this is impossible today to think of: We were young girls and didn't do any work. That you would be accepting this in this country-- that sounds impossible, actually, but there, there was nothing else that one could do. And since we were kind of dependent, we just agreed to it. Then my mother got sick. She had cancer and died in 1939. I want to jump now to 1940, the tenth of May, when we heard in the morning at about 3 or 4 a.m. hundreds of airplanes over Amsterdam. One got up and looked out, and one knew without hearing it from anybody that this is the ememy coming. Right away you heard the flak. The Dutch were shooting planes down. You could even see some falling from the sky, burning. That same morning there was a law brought out that all foreigners had to stay in their houses. We were Germans at that time still, with German passports-- also Jewish, but still then, we were in that moment, enemy. Whoever would be found in the street would be prosecuted. Still, many tried to go to the coast and go find a little boat to go to England. My father and one of my sisters did so too, but they came back because there was nothing available. Some people were lucky enough to get to England. Many drowned in little boats between Holland and England.

Many also fell into the wrong hands and then were delivered to the Germans. This took five days, and the German occupation was in place. From then on, we could go out again, but life immediately changed drastically. In Holland the occupation was civil occupation, so they right away went into all phases of life: business and universities and acting-- into everything. Jews were drawn out and replaced by either Germans or Dutch people who were friendly towards them, although the majority of the Dutch people were very anti-German-- Very anti-German-- and wanted to help Jews as much as possible. But there again, we, being German Jews, had no contact with Dutch non-Jews who could have helped us going into hiding or contacts with Jews again.

Q: WHAT WERE SOME OF THE DISABILITIES OR LAWS OR CHANGES THAT HAPPENED VERY QUICKLY THAT YOU EXPERIENCED?

A: In business and in restaurants that were very, very soon not for Jews: "Jews Not Allowed." In many places, you just couldn't enter anymore. That was before we were wearing the star. Then the streetcar you were not allowed to use anymore. This came on very, very, fast.

Q: DURING THE FIRST SUMMER OR THE FIRST FALL?

A: In 1940 slowly. In '41 it started, and I would say the first dramatic thing in Holland was in February 1941: There was the first razzia in the Jewish area. In Amsterdam there was a Jewish area, and they just closed off a street from one end to the other, and everybody who was in there was captured. They did release women and children. They took only young men.

Q: BUT YOUR FAMILY WAS NOT LIVING IN THAT SECTION?

A: No, that was strictly a Dutch Jewish area, and I would say mostly factory workers-- what you call here blue collar workers. They lived in that area. This was the first time in Amsterdam that these people were taken and shipped to concentration camps. In those days, you didn't even know where they went. You hadn't heard or Poland yet, that people were going to Poland, because in Germany, they were

sent into camps like Buchenwald and Dachau or Oranienburg. These are very well-known German camps, and so far, we only heard of these camps. We didn't know of any camps in Poland, but at that time in '41, the Germans had invaded Poland. The war was going on, and they had built already those camps, and these were the first people, in February 1941, who were sent to Poland.

Q: DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THAT IMMEDIATELY AND HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT IT? WAS IT IN THE NEWSPAPERS?

A: Oh, yes, it was in the Jewish papers, by word of mouth-- you heard it immediately, somebody was in the area. And Solidarity, the non-Jewish blue collar workers, were striking, they were striking for a long time. But finally, they had to go back to work, because the Germans were telling them, "You either go back to work, or you'll go also." So from then on you heard in Holland, in Amsterdam, here and there, of people being taken to concentration camps somewhere, but it was still very hazy, and you din't know about it. It was just by word of mouth that you heard it, but through third and fourth persons.

Q: WAS YOUR FAMILY GOING TO SYNAGOGUES AT THAT TIME?

A: Yes.

Q: WERE YOU COMMUNICATING WITH THE OTHER GERMAN JEWS ONLY?

A: No, Dutch Jews also. This was a synagogue that was in that area, but this was a totally different area from this, which I was just explaining. One was a blue collar area, and where we lived was middle class-- a different area, a different type of people.

Q: DID A LOT OF INFORMATION COME THROUGH JUST FROM FELLOW JEWS?

A: Absolutley, yes.

Q: SO YOU STILL DIDN'T HAVE VERY MUCH CONTACT WITH THE DUTCH?

A: No, not with the Dutch non-Jews, no, not at all.

Q: DID YOU HAVE VERY MUCH OCCASION TO SEE GERMANS WHO WERE ADMINISTRATING, OR DID YOU HAVE ANY CONTACT AT ALL WITH THE GERMANS AT THIS POINT?

A: You mean the German Nazis?

Q: YES.

A: We could see them because their headquarters was about three minutes from where we lived. We saw them, but we rather did not go past that street. It was a school building, and they had taken it over. If you could avoid that street, you did. This has nothing really to do with the Holocaust: So many of the Dutch non-Jews got killed too, because they were anti-Nazi. They did all kinds of sabotage. In many areas of Amsterdam you can see today still, they have tablets on the wall: "Here died so-and-so," and the name. They just were shooting them down in the street. This is what you heard also, and it was just going on every day.

Q: DID YOU EXPERIENCE ANY OTHER ADDITIONAL LAWS AGAINST THE JEWS BETWEEN THEN AND THE TIME THAT YOU WERE DEPORTED IN AMSTERDAM?

A: Yes, laws where you couln't go to a store. There were certain hours when Jews couldn't shop. There was an open air market only for Jews. You couldn't go to any other one. There were signs all over. No matter what it was, there was a sign: "Not Allowed for Jews to Enter." You couldn't go from here to there without asking for permission, which you certainly didn't get, but just not allowed. The Jews from the area close to the sea had to move inland in order that they couldn't give any signs to the British or to whomever. So Jews were not allowed to live close to the Atlantic bordering some resort places where normally Jews lived. They all had to move to the city away from the ocean.

Q: WAS THAT BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT THOUGHT THE JEWS WOULD AID THE ENEMY?

A: Absolutley, yes. And you were totally inhibited and not allowed to do anything at all other than what they allowed you to do.

Q: YOU WEREN'T GOING TO SCHOOL DURING THIS TIME WERE YOU?

A: No.

Q: WHAT WERE YOU DOING? YOU SAID YOU WEREN'T ALLOWED TO WORK?

A: We weren't allowed to work, yes. I took some lessons in Spanish, I learned to knit, machine knit. Things like this I did; my sisters did something else. It was not that easy, but we were also not the only ones who had not really anything

specific to do. Besides, at that time, it got more difficult and more difficult for Jews to do anything unless you did something for some Jewish outfit. In 1941 in June was the next razzia very close to where we lived, and where they caught also again all young people who just happened to be in that street. There happened to a very good friend of mine, and they were sent to Mauthausen. But there also, they took only young men, not girls, not women, only men. So far it was always only men. That's why women felt a little-- there was no experience that women were taken; there was always men, and young men. You had to be in the age maybe from 20 to 45. They were put into trucks and taken to the railroad station. That was the first time Mauthausen was heard of. Of these people nobody came back, and we knew very, very soon what happened there. There were quarries and they were working there, and they were thrown down or were shot on the spot. They did away with all these young men from Amsterdam within a very short time, because there came letters back via the Red Cross: "I'm sorry to inform you that your son, so-and-so, has died of pneumonia in Mauthausen." That was in 1941 in June. I remember very well, because, as I said, a friend of mine was among those. Then it started that you heard that whole families were being picked up in their houses.

Q: WHEN WAS IT THAT YOU STARTED TO HEAR ABOUT THAT?

A: We heard in the beginning of 1942, I would say. It was not in one area. It was once here, once there, once here. We had to be in our houses at 8 p.m., everybody in their own house. I do not recall-- I would say it was in 1942.

Q: THAT A CURFEW WAS PUT UPON YOU?

A: Yes, for Jews, all Jews, no matter whether they were Dutch. By the Germans we were not treated any differently-- the Dutch and the German or whoever there was, it was the same. You had to be in your own house, and you were totally cut off. You could use the telephone, but you were totally cut off. You were in your house and you didn't know, "Is this going to happen today, or is it not going to happen

today that somebody knocks at the door?" There were several months at least until we were finally picked up, I would say eight months. That was a condition very hard to describe, an anxiety, a daily anxiety. It was not in daytime. You were always glad when morning was there, because these razzias took place, they came usually shortly after 8 o'clock, between 8 and 12 o'clock, I would say, at night. In daytime, unless you were caught in a razzia, you wouldn't have anything to fear. At night, any night, they could be knocking at your door. Before, on July 15, 1942, we were three sisters, we each got a card: "You have to be at the central station on the 15th of July, 1942 at this-and-this time, and bring along a blanket and some underwear and some warm clothes. You are going to a work camp in the east."

Q: THIS EXCLUDED YOUR PARENTS?

A: This excluded my parents. My mother didn't live then anymore. It excluded my father. It was for people up to 40 years old to work-- that was their thing-- to the work camp in the east.

Q: WHO SENT THAT NOTICE TO YOU?

A: The Germans.

Q: THEY DIDN'T USE ANY OTHER CHANNELS?

A: No, that came from the Germans, directly from the Germans. With this, my father had some banking connection with a Dutch man who was originally German; you could manipulate something in those days still. So we got all free. We all got a piece of paper where it says, "You do not have to appear," or something. I don't remember any more what it said, but it said we were free for this particular transport. We were happy that this would pass by without affecting us, but you knew in the future it would come again. Many people did this who knew that one or the other. The thing was, the Germans couldn't care whether it's you or you or you, as long as there were 800 people. If somebody came and said, "Oh, let these people go," they'd say, "Sure, we'll take three others." That's how it worked. They were not after us personally. They had to fill a transport

of 800 people, and whoever it was was totally immaterial as long as there were enough bodies to go. So this is how many people at one time or another time, you wiggled yourself out of it. But the anxiety from that moment was with you. You knew it's going to come again, because the transports went daily or three times a week. I don't know how often.

Q: DID THEY ALWAYS DEPART FROM THE SAME PLACE?

A: In Amsterdam, in the beginning they departed, you were to come to the central station. Later on when these trains went more often, there was a theatre which was being used to assemble the people, and from there they were sent.

Q: WHAT WAS THE THEATRE?

A: That was in the Jewish area which I said at first was maybe blue collar, a Jewish area. It was an old theatre which was used to assemble the people who were sent from there to the one camp or to the other camp. But in the meantime, the Germans didn't want to do the work all themselves, so there were so many Jews-- it was called then the Jewish Council-- who did the work for them. The thing was, everybody was looking out for themselves; when you were working there, you were not sent to Poland. So it wasn't then that you did work for them and sent somebody else away, it was you protected yourself. That's what it was-- everybody for themselves. This was the thing. Now, many afterwards said, "How could you have done it, doing work like this?" But it was protecting, at least for some time, their own skin. That's what it was, basically. So the Jews did this kind of work, and whatever questions or things you had, you dealt with the Jewish Council. The Germans were more in the background. They didn't want to do all that work--"Let the Jews do it." So the lists of people were made by the Jews. There was a real big enterprise in Amsterdam, because all these people from outlying areas came to the city and there were being sent away from Amsterdam, in many instances, unless it was very far away and they went to some other city. But anything in the vicinity of so many miles came to Amsterdam, Jews out of the Amsterdam area. So this

anxiety is something indescribable, when you are living daily with this anxiety that you might be picked up that evening, and you are going somewhere-- in those days, we didn't know really what was going to happen once you are being picked up. You knew from a few camps, but your knowledge was hazy. We lived for months under this anxiety. Then on March 10, 1943, 8 o'clock, we were having our supper, and I can see it in front of me what was on the table. There was a knock at the door. And you knew that famous knock at the door. There were two Dutch Nazis: "Are you so-and-so, are you so-and-so?" They had the names, and they had orders to pick us up. They were two, and we were four people. We had packed our knapsacks.

Q: YOU LIVED WITH EVERYTHING PACKED?

A: Yes, you lived with everything packed. There was every night, next to your bed, everything standing ready. There were ten minutes time. We left the house the way it was, the things on the table, just as it was. First we went to another school. We went into a truck.

Q: THIS IS NOW ALL OF YOU, YOUR SISTERS AND YOUR FATHER?

A: Yes, my sisters and my father and myself. We went into a truck and to a school which was not far from us. There we were assembled. Also, so many people we met there-- people we knew. From there, we went to that theatre which I was talking about before which was in a different area. That was on March 10, 1943. When we came there it was <u>crowded</u>. And the facilities in a theatre, you don't have any toilet facilities, nothing, not for hundreds and hundreds of people. We were sitting there in the theatre, and we were just waiting there until your name was being called. The strange thing is, living for months and months under anxiety, once you got there you felt kind of relieved, although the worst was just to come. But you felt relieved of this anxiety of "when are we going to be picked up?"-- because you knew you were going to be picked up, you just knew it, because every morning you knew this family and

that family and that family. You knew this was a question of days, or weeks. It was kind of a relief you were picked up and you were sitting there, and in the moment, you didn't want to worry about anything, because you really didn't know what you were going to worry about. We were sitting there from March 10 to March 12 in the theatre with no facilities, There were a couple of bathrooms, no washing facilities, nothing. I remember we got some food, and that was hardly adequate; I don't remember anymore whether it was, but I would imagine it was. There was a tremendous going on, and back and forth, and you didn't know what was going to happen to you. I remember when my name was called, when our names were called, we came to a man who was in the Jewish Council who we knew. He said, "If I can give you an advice, go to Vught. This is a working camp. You have a better chance than to Westerbork." From Westerbork they sent the people straight through to Poland to get rid of them. There were thousands coming in, and there were thousands going out. So we decided we'd go to the work camp. We had no idea what this would mean, the work camp. So he put us down for the work camp, and that same night we were put on a train, just a regular train, and after a few hours ride we arrived, some time in the middle of the night, at Vught. This was a camp which was just being established, but there were people streaming in. There was nothing finished. I remember the ground was earth, we were walking on earth. Your bed, those three-tiered beds, were on dirt. There was no floor, nothing. There was a roof, but no floor. So you were put in there, men and women; my father went to one side, and my sister and I went in another barrack.

Q: THE THREE OF YOU WERE STILL TOGETHER, THREE SISTERS?

A: No, my one sister, who is now living in Los Angeles, worked for the Jewish Council, and she, through the Jewish Council, was freed at that time, so she went back to our apartment. But my other sister, my father, and I

were in Vught. There was first total camp chaos-- nothing to do, totally unorganized. But this didn't take very long. They said, "Everybody had to work. This is a work camp; everybody has to work." So they made work. Somewhere outside you had to carry bricks from here to there, from there to here, back and forth-- just to make work. An underling had to bring proof to his superior that the Jews were all working. It was just totally ridiculous. One could see that there was no work, just that we were busy all day. The main thing was to stand and be counted. We had to stand two hours in the morning and two hours at night. That was the most important for the Germans-- the German typical thoroughness-- everybody was counted by name and had to say, "Here," or whatever. At these counting places, if somebody had died-- there were so many old people that just died-- they had to be present also. They were put in a wheelbarrow and they were standing there and they were counted. Afterwards they were counted out, but if they died during the day, they were there in the morning. If they were dead in the evening, they had to appear dead. Afterwards they were done away with.

Q: WAS IT GERMAN NAZIS OR DUTCH NAZIS, OR WHO WAS IN CHARGE?

A: German. The Dutch Nazis were not too many, and certainly the Germans felt to be the overlord over the Dutch Nazis.

Q: SO NOW YOU WERE DEALING DIRECTLY WITH GERMAN NAZIS?

A: Yes, German Nazis. Pretty soon, I don't remember now how many days, but there were trucks coming in with sewing machines, and they put up factories to sew uniforms, and also machines for making fur for the inside of the coats for the Russian Front. These were the two factories. I couldn't sew. The girls who came out of the dressmaking or clothing manufacturing all went to these factories and started working. They had their routine work, and when they were through, they had to stand and be counted and then go back to the barrack, but their life was not really bad. I at the time, started something that was offered to

me: to take care of the food for the individual barracks, to count the people. The thing was, these Dutch people didn't speak any German. There were a few Germans, and the few German-speaking people had the positions directly with the Germans, because I had to fill in forms-- so many people here, so many people there.

Q: SO BECAUSE YOU WERE GERMAN YOU WERE ASSIGNED TO THAT?

A: Yes. That was definitely an honor in the camp, and advantage for me that they wanted people with whom they could communicate. I did this for some time, but this was a very iffy kind of work, because they wanted everybody to work to bring money in for them. What I did didn't make money for them. The ones who made uniforms, they were being paid for it-- not the people who made the uniforms-- but the camp got paid; it was a factory. I was afraid. When you have some position in a camp where you-- I was not singled out, but I was not in the mass there-- it was dangerous. When I originally came to the camp, I gave as my profession, physical therapist. That was my profession, I learned this for my degree. But I pretty soon regretted it, because at one time I was called-- one of the Germans had fallen from a horse-- to treat him. I did it a few times, but he got better, thank God, soon enough so it didn't last. This kind of thing was potentially very dangerous. You got inside where they lived and how they lived, and they didn't want this, they didn't want anybody to know anything about them. Then in this camp was another factory being erected, where Phillips Lamp Factory-- that's a big Dutch company-- brought in machinery to make radios. This originally was meant for their Jewish workers, whom they wanted to protect by putting part of their factory in the camp, and in turn making money out of them and protecting them at the same time. So when this factory was started, I started to work for them. I was on a conveyor belt making radios for submarines. This was when I started to have a chance to listen to the BBC; at the end of the line where the radio was tested-- we had to

look out that no German was around-- we knew how the war was going, inside the camp. When I decided to work for Phillips, I had the choice also to go into the clothing manufacturing. I had no idea how to make a radio or to make uniforms; it was the same for me. But I said to myself, if anything goes bad, the radios will last longer, they will manufacture them longer than the uniforms or the fur for the coats. It was the right decision, and I made this absolutely on my own, because who would have told me to do that? Nobody. But I thought this would be the last of these three factories. And as it turned out, it was. They closed the clothing manufacturing much, much earlier. The invasion was June 6, I think. Then I was sent away on June 5; it was the day before, I know that, but I think those were the dates, 1944. That was at a time when everybody, all Jews had to go away out of the west. Whoever could be sent away was sent away.

Q: WERE THEY ACTUALLY IN THE PROCESS OF CLOSING DOWN THE CAMP?

A: Yes, the camp was closed down. Everybody was evacuated at that time.

Q: AND DID EVERYBODY AROUND YOU GO TO AUSCHWITZ? FOR INSTANCE, DID YOUR FAMILY?

A: My family was sent away the same month we arrived in Vught. My father was, they said at the time, up to age 50, he was just 60; that was the excuse for him. My sister had some papers going for her to get married to some man in Sweden, which was only on paper. Anybody who had any papers which were not one-hundred percent was sent away too, So my father and my sister left, and I was alone in that camp without my family.

Q: DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR FATHER AND SISTER WENT?

A: Sobibor. They went on the same train to Sobibor, and we heard from the Red Cross a report that they died six days after leaving. They went to Westerbork first and were sent to Sobibor. The thing was, at that time already, we were best off being alone, all alone, because the minute you had to watch out for somebody else, they took

something away from you. I was-- and this goes back to Holland still-- very optimistic. I had the chance to listen to the BBC, which helped me a great deal. My motto was self-preservation. I did not do a thing which wasn't absolutely necessary in order to donserve what strength I had, which also proved the right thing to do. Some people, in order to get an extra piece of bread, which wasn't worth anything, did some extra work, like cleaning the barrack. I never volunteered for anything, which was volunteer work for a piece of bread. I felt to conserve my strength was more important than a piece of bread. We were going in a cattle car from Vught to Auschwitz. It was my first acquaintanceship with a cattle car. It was a closed one and there was some straw on the ground. It was packed. The car was packed with I don't remember how many people. You got a piece of bread about the size of one loaf, and they said, "This has to last through the trip." The doors were dlosed, and there was a pail in there for you to do your business. For that whole car-- I would say there were at least 60 to 80 people in that car-- there was just enough room for you to sit down and have your legs pulled up, and that was it. You had your piece of bread, and that was it.

Q: HOW LONG DID THAT TRIP LAST?

A: I think it was five days. There was a little air vent; That was all the air we got on that whole trip. The doors were never opened. There was no air. People got sick over so many days with so many people. All kinds of things happened. Nobody cared or nobody bothered. We were in there, and I remember my tongge was so swollen that it hardly fitted in my mouth. I was dying of thirst. Nobody had anything to drink. There was nothing to drink. This was the first time-- in Holland it was a concentration camp, and I saw people being hung up, and I saw people being whipped-- but it was nothing to what happened after I left the Dutch border. Also in Holland, you had what they call "kapos", which were German nationals which

came out of penitentiaries who were there for murdering or for any kind of thing, had nothing to do with the Nazis. They were taken out of the penitentiaries who had long-term sentences, and they were made overlord over the camp. They were also in the east when these camps were built, like Auschwitz and Sobibor or these kinds of camps. These people came from there. They helped to build them together with Jews. From then on we knew already: The minute you go on a train and you go to the east, that means the end. They told us about the gas chambers. I knew exactly what was going to happen there. But if you had to go on the train, you'd go on the train-- at that time, you didn't care, absolutely didn't care. I arrived in Auschwitz - Birkenau, and we had to get out of that car and hardly could walk, because when you have been sitting for so many days or not moving, you can hardly walk. And "quick, quick, quick," everything had to be quick. There were standing there a number of those guys in their uniforms at the ramp, and-- you know the well-known stories-- right off the bat they said, "You go here, and you go here." I had the luck that I was the right age and was going to the side where I knew if somebody had a chance, I would have a chance. I knew the older people-- there were a number still of older people, the young, all kinds of people-- they were right away on the other side.

Q: SO YOU COULD JUST SEE FOR YOURSELF?

A: Oh, yes, you could, absolutely. But I was in a daze and in no position to be thinking about anything, and I didn't care.

Q: COULD WE JUST GET THE DATE AGAIN WHEN THIS TRANSFER TO AUSCHWITZ OCCURRED?

A: It was, I would say, the fifth of June, because D-Day was the sixth of June, and it was a day before. We were once alerted to be going away when they thought the invasion would come, and the invasion didn't come. We were already on the trucks, and went down from the trucks

again, went back to the camp. That was a couple of days before. They were not sure when the invasion would take place, but they knew that the invasion was going to come, and we were sent away a day before. So now I'm in Auschwitz being herded into a room where you took off everything you had on. You didn't have on much, because already in Vught I had an overall on, and I had my own shoes. In Auschwitz my shoes were gone, my overall was gone. I was naked, like everybody else. We were standing for 48 hours in a little room, the ones which were selected to stay, without anybody doing anything, without food, without anything at all. Then all of a sudden, we were herded into another room where they had like a shower-looking. We knew, everybody in my transport knew what this meant. But as it turned out, water was coming out, and we had a regular shower. Afterward you got a striped dress, and on your feet you had wooden clogs. Clogs and a dress and nothing else. This was in June, it was summer. It was warm enough at that time, so it was okay. We were brought into barracks, and also again, three tiers of beds--[illegible] beds-- with a straw sack, where you're sleeping on a straw sack. The supervisor of this particular barrack was a monster; a Jewish girl who had survived already several years and was as cruel as anything. This experience I had at all in the east. They came from different parts, Romania or Poland, who had years and years of hard labor in these camps and had lost family and were as cold and as miserable as one can imagine, at least as bad as the Germans, because they were running around also with a whip. At will they did just anything. So these people out of my group were selected to go to work, were brought into a room where we were rfgistered, And registered meant the tattoo. This was administered by Jewish girls. The only thing that they said to us was, "You are lucky. You go to work, and you don't deserve it. We had to struggle, and you just come yesterday, and already in a couple of days you will be going away from here."

The tattooing we knew also. That was their form of registration, that was your name. Your name was of no importance, it wasn't taken anyplace. That was your number, and you went under that number, When I arrived in Auschwitz, there was a terrible, terrible stench which was hanging over the camp, which I still have today in my nose when anything is burning, like bones burning. Sometimes when something burns, there is a certain smell to it, and that gives me immediately a flashback of this stench which was in the air and everything there in this area, because these ovens, they were going 24 hours. You could see in Birkenau, which was the place where the gas chamber was. Auschwitz and Birkenau were two different camps. Birkenau was the one with the ovens and the gas chamber. Out of Auschwitz they had the working commandos. For instance, there were latrines, but you were not allowed to use them, because they had to be clean at all times, things like this. The barrack supervisor said that; they were her laws: "You are not supposed to use this!" because there was inspection everyday from the Germans, and otherwise, she would have gotten it. She didn't allow anybody, so you just had to fend for yourself some way or other. But at that time already, normal functions of the human body had stopped, because you were already to a certain extent undernourished. So that was one good part that your normal functions didn't function normally, because at least that didn't bother you. Also, as we were coming out of the shower at Auschwitz, all our hair was shaved off. You looked at the one you knew yesterday and you didn't recognize the person, because everybody looked like a little boy. At that time, we had already lost so much weight, and then without hair, it was an incredible sight. Now came the thing to be selected to work that took place following. We were naked and paraading in front of about 15 men who were deciding. Like a model on a ramp, turning around, they were looking at you, and your body had to be a certain way still so that they could get some labor out of you to

make it worthwhile for them, because for every laborer, they were being paid from the companies where you worked. So the SS was standing there. They were from the factory for which I was going to work, which was Telefunken, who were selecting people. They let you parade, and then decided. Many people had all kinds of eczemas, and they didn't take any of those. My best friend there, she happened to have all kinds of red spots, and she wasn't taken. But she came a few weeks later; she was taken after this. She was lucky that she was not killed at that instant when they found out how her body looked, because they turned down there also: "You go here, and you go here." They turned down people whose body didn't look right. I had to parade in front of 15 men, and I remember them all and I see them in front of me with their cocky hats and standing with their cigarets in their mouths, viewing everybody and laughing, grinning. Oh, and you in yourself were boiling somehow! But really, in a way, you felt so superior to these guys, because all of them were about the scum of humanity. Whoever went for this kind of work wasn't really worth anything. It wasn't a good national, because otherwise he would have gone to the front and feught. So he really was, most of them were the scum and were absolutley and totally uneducated. I didn't meet one man or one woman in all the camps I was who had any degree of education. They barely could speak their own language, barely, with mistakes and all. The women were, when it came to being miserable, much worse than the men. The women usually wanted to take it out on Jews, because they had previous experiences as working for Jews and were envious of Jews. They just wanted to punish every Jew there was, and were happy to see Jews suffering. I believe in my experience, definitely, that the women were much worse than the men. But overall, men and women were the scum of society, and they felt so superior. But you still could feel that they knew that most of the people whom they were watching over were superior to them. They knew that also. But at that moment they were the ones who

called the shots, and they made the most of it. So these guys were standing there, one cockier than the next. I was happy I was selected to go to work, which I knew at that time would be going to some factory and away from Auschwitz. Auschwitz was the home, but I was not physically in Auschwitz. After a few days, I was sent away to Reichenbach, where also hastily a camp was built. It was not a real camp. It was just barracks and there was barbed wire around and the German men and women to guard us, but it was not a camp in itself. We had to walk for one hour from there to an existing factory, where we worked from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m.

Q: DO YOU REALLY MEAN FROM THE EVENING TO MORNING?

A: Yes.

Q: WHAT KIND OF WORK WAS THAT?

A: Also for radio parts. From then on I only worked for radios, and they were always for, I think, submarines or for planes, whatever; it was for important war material, the things they really needed. The work was sitting down, but night work was very, very strenuous for everybody. When you are already in a weakened condition, undernourished, and you work for 12 hours and then you walk for two hours, rain or shine, your production certainly isn't very good. But they were constantly marching behind you with their dogs, always with dogs, their guns and their dogs. That was always around you. When you wanted to go to the bathroom, somebody went with you. When you wanted-- nothing else really was there for you to do. You got a meal at 11 p.m., a meal that consisted out of a soup, and then you continued. You maybe took 15 minutes, you could eat your soup, and that was it. With us were working Germans, working Russians, working Polish people, non-Jews who were also laborers, not slave laborers the way we were, but laborers also, forced laborers who were not living where we were living, but also living away from the Germans-- all the Poles and the Russians.

Q: WERE YOU ALLOWED TO MIX WITH THESE PEOPLE, TO TALK WITH THEM AT ALL?

A: You could talk to them, yes. They felt themselves also superior to us; we were the lowest. The Germans who worked for these factories, they were normal factory workers, and they felt totally superior over us. There were also the big shots. The worst was when their lunch time came or whatever time to eat; they unpacked their rolls and sausage. Everyday that was the most horrible thing-- to smell it, to witness it when you are so hungry you could eat a piece of wood almost-- you see this. When we were marching through a little village towards our barracks, we passed by bakeries where they just had baked fresh bread, you smelled that. We were walking through these little villages, and everybody was gawking, and afterwards everybody said they didn't know anything was going on. But they saw us in our striped dresses and with the SS marching next to us.

Q: YOU THINK THESE VILLAGERS DID SEE YOU GO BACK AND FORTH EVERY DAY?

A: Naturally.

Q: BUT THEY DIDN'T MIX WITH YOU AT ALL?

A: Oh, god, no, no, no. In the barracks we had to stand for one hour for the counting, the usual thing, twice a day counting-- when you leave and when you come back. When someone made a mistake of those miserable people, you had to stand another hour because maybe one was missing, even though it was just a mistake counting, we had had to stand another hour, rain or shine again.

Q: DO YOU KNOW THE PLACE WHERE YOU WERE STAYING? WAS THE FACTORY IN REICHENBACH?

A: Yes, and the place where I lived was outside. It was just barracks. It was not a camp.

Q: OUTSIDE OF THE CITY?

A: Oh, yes, outside somewhere in the woods, they just erected this to house these people. There were wires around. There was one thing which I didn't mention before: You could not permit yourself to get sick, absolutely not, because this meant absolutely the end. It wasn't the case in Holland, but in Reichenbach, for instance, there were

no facilities, nothing. You got sick-- you were picked up with, it looked like a mail truck, but you knew also what that truck was-- that you were killed right in there. It had some gas also going in there. Right in that truck you were killed. You knew that also when that truck came and picked up somebody. But whoever got sick, everybody pushed themselves to the utmost. You didn't get sick. But suppose you got sick? You were in such a condition that you didn't care-- thank god it's over, kind of. I saw many people leaving this way, just were picked up and that was it. Never heard of them again.

Q: HOW MANY PEOPLE WOULD YOU SAY WERE WORKING WITH YOU, FELLOW JEWS?

A: 250

Q: WERE THEY MOSTLY YOUR AGE, YOUNG PEOPLE?

A: Yes.

Q: ALL AGES?

A: Oh, no, not all ages. There were no older people. There were a few young girls, 12 years old, but they were tall. They were with their mothers, and their mothers had kind of protected them before. But they were old enough-looking-- in age they were not-- but they could go. They were not looking like children. Children? No, nobody, no child. Twelve-year-old girls, yes, there were three I remember.

Q: THEN ALL YOUNG ADULTS?

A: Yes, all young adults. The oldest maybe was 40 or 45. But the thing was at that point you had to have already a tremendous will to continue, because my nutrition was working so much against me. I can only speak for myself-- I know by that time I felt I had to do this. I was doing it like a robot. I didn't know what I was doing. I knew I had to do a certain work, but it was automatic, kind of. When I was in there, it started that I had the feeling that I'm physically there, but everything else is gone. You couldn't think. You tried to keep sanity. You were thinking; what was the name of your father? Your mother? What was your birthday? Things like this were difficult to

remember, absolutely difficult. Your mind didn't function, absolutely did not function. When I later on thought about it, I felt from then on until the end like a bear in hibernation, who continues living, but doesn't eat and is probably not himself. I don't know what made me go, what made me do, I don't know what did it. It must have been my will to survive, which was very, very strong. But I know my mind was gone. You did hardly talk to your fellow workers; you didn't, because you preserved your strength. Every word that comes out of you is a strain. Later, it was not at this point, but I didn't even want to eat that piece of bread which I got, because it was too strenuous to open your mouth. Once your mouth was open, it didn't close by itself. But this came really later. In Reichenbach, I was until, it must have been the end of December, because there was a rumble in the east of Russians. You could hear it very distantly in 1944 in December. But we went everyday to our factory, and often we went there and there was no material, because the trains were bombed which brought from the west material for us to work with. We were there all night having nothing to do, and just went back to our barracks. Then one night, we were called. We had to appear and we went on a truck and were sent to Langenbilau, which was not very far from Reichenbach, but it was a little bit towards the west. There we stayed for another four weeks. We worked again in a factory. There was already a type of disintegration. They pushed you from here to there and didn't really know what to do with us.

Q: WHEN WAS THIS APPROXIMATELY?

A: I left Langenbilau on the 19th of January 1945, and this was about four weeks earlier. But we left, and there again, we had only the dress, nothing. This was in December and it was very very cold in that area at the Polish border. With only the dress and these wooden clogs, and no stockings, no underwear, no nothing. But there again, this was manifested. I later talked to a psychiatrist, and they knew all this because of manifested stories that people before

me were talking about: that you were not cold, you were not warm, you were not hungry, you were not thirsty, you were not tired, you were not anything. You walked, you did your work. How you did it-- that is far, far beyond me. I couldn't explain how I did it. But I know at that time I didn't have to eat anything, because I didn't require anything. Whatever I lived off, what little substance, whatever was left, I don't know.

Q: YOU WERE SAYING THAT AT LANGENBILAU THE CONDITIONS WERE ALREADY EVEN WORSE?

A: Oh, yes. There was already disintegration. The Germans were very jittery, and they knew the Russians were coming, and the war wasn't going well.

Q: WERE YOU BEING GIVEN FOOD STILL?

A: Food, yes. The food consisted out of a piece of bread, which was not really bread-- it looked like bread, but it was a moist kind of a substance, and if you left it for a few hours, it became gray. Whatever it was, I don't know, I never knew. Soup we got as a rule as long as we were in a camp. It was usually water with potato peels in it. That was it. There was never anything more than that.

Q: WAS IT THE SAME KIND OF WORK AT LANGENBILAU?

A: Yes, again, radio parts.

Q: WITH THE SAME GROUP OF PEOPLE?

A: With the same group of people, yes. I traveled always with the same group of people. But at that point, as I said, you didn't talk anymore. The one who was walking next to you, working next to you, there was no conversation going, because you were already in a state of-- I don't know what kind of a state-- only half-existing. To me this is still, up to today, unbelievable, that you can continue walking and working. I would say I was not a human being. Whatever I was, I don't know. But I wasn't a human being. At Langenbilau, again, after those four weeks, we were told we have to walk 120 kilometers to Trautenau, which is in Czechoslovakia, and we will go in four days. On that march, many, many people just dropped by the wayside. It was in

snow. I didn't wear those wooden clogs. I went with bare feet on the snow, walked with bare feet. And the soles of my feet were dark blue. This is how I walked 120 kilometers, and not me alone. But many people gave up on this trip. Right and left, you could see them sitting down, and immediately he went with the gun and shot. We just walked on. You have seen so many dead people that you don't care. It didn't phase you at all. At night when it got dark, we went to some kind of a barn. Maybe there were some animals in it or not. We just were lying down in a barn. In the morning, the minute it got light, with no light, with nothing to wash with, nothing at all. The washing was very haphazard the whole two years, and my skin was like parchment by that time, leather. It wasn't skin at all, it was a paper. It wasn't skin the way skin feels. But besides all the dirt, there were the bedbugs, and other bugs which you had in your beds, and which you had on your bodies, and which made sores on your body. The sores didn't heal because you didn't take care of it, and there was no medication. You went with your finger maybe and tried to get the pus out, and it made a deep, deep hole. There were two types the way people developed: One type was skin and bones, the way you have seen it many times, and the other, the way I was, I was blown up. So I looked better probably than skin and bones, but I was just as weak. I had edema all over my body, and I remember these kind of eczemas that I had holes in like you could have put a finger in. But anything was better than to say, "I need to be taken care of." That you didn't want to do. There were people who had appendicitis also, and they just had to go for help. But the help usually was either they were operated on and never came back from the operating room, or nothing happened to them. The only thing in that whole time that I had done to me was that I had a tooth pulled. I had an infected tooth, and it was pulled with just some instrument, and finished. I was sitting on a chair, and

that was it. That was a question of one minute. Some guy did this for me, some sanitation man.

Q: ON THAT WALK TO TRAUTENAU, DID YOU PASS THROUGH ANY VILLAGES OR DID YOU ENCOUNTER ANY PEOPLE?

A: Oh, absolutely. There were always people who were standing there. Often they were laughing. They were just thinking, "This is beautiful what's happened to the Jews!" And those workers in the factories, the Germans, they said, "Well, this is very good what happened to you. When the war is over, you will have to work in factories also. You might not have to live the way you are living now, but you will always be separated from us." That was their idea. I didn't find anybody who didn't think it was just right what happened to us. We were the sub-human beings.

Q: YOU'RE NOT JUST TALKING ABOUT GERMANS ARE YOU?

A: Germans, sure.

Q: WAS THERE ANY OTHER NATIONALITY?

A: No, the other nationalities, they were themselves forced laborers. The Poles and the Russians were forced laborers, but not slave laborers. There was a difference. They had to live in certain areas in barracks, I think also, but they didn't have the Germans with guns around them all the time. This four-day march, 120 kilometers, and we arrived in Trautenau, which was in the Riesengebürge, and we were put up I remember in a spinning factory. We were put up at night. It was the last night before we went on transport. You were lying down between machines. There was nothing on the floor. You were on the floor, period! As usual, they had no food for us, maybe some bread, I do not remember this. But as I say, at that time, that didn't interest me at all, because I was past the stage where I wanted to eat anything. It took out too much strength. In Trautenau, I remember it clearly, it was snowing and we went in an open cattle car, and standing up. The train got started and we were riding for days. I learned there to sleep standing up, because there was not room to lie down, and you knew you were not going down-- if you did,

you were trampled on, you were dead in no time. But out of this cattle car every morning there were so many dead in the car, because they just went down. They were thrown out of the car, and that was it. So the car got lighter and lighter. There were less and less people, because no new ones came, and with so many dying off. Eventually there was room that you could sit down. On the way to the east we passed by Bergen-Belsen. They wanted to put us up in Bergen-Belsen, and there was no room in Bergen-Belsen. I remember the train was standing outside of Bergen-Belsen, and I knew-- I had heard this before-- my sister was in Bergen-Belsen. They gave us soup there, and there were a few people out of the camp, and I just happened to ask one one-in-a-million shot if he knew my sister, and he did. My sister had studied in Paris and spoke French very well, and she was interpreter for the Greek community, who had no way of communicating with the Germans. The educated Greeks spoke French, so she was interpreter. This is how she was known. He said, "Oh, sure I know Her." Out of thousands of people, I thought, I don't know, what can happen? And I asked. We couldn't get into Bergen-Belsen, and I would have wished so much to get there. Here, when you talk about Bergen-Belsen, people think it was the worst camp-- it wasn't at all, because they didn't have to work and there was no gas chamber. It was a camp where you had nothing to do, and that was maybe bad, and little food, but you were not forced to work and had no food. We couldn't get into Bergen-Belsen because it was over-crowded, so the train came to a dead end in the Luneburger-Heide. This is somewhere in Northern Germany. It's not very far from Bergen-Belsen. It came to a dead stop and we got out there. We were there for days and days and days, and they were surrounding us. Every so many feet there was a German with a gun and a dog. Otherwise we could be sitting on the meadow doing nothing, have no food, have nothing. But we didn't have to stay in those cattle cars, because they

didn't know what to do with us. It had come to a point already that the invasion was in the west and the east. They were pushedy pushed and didn't know what to do with the people.

Q: WAS THIS PARTICULAR POINT IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA?

A: No, this was already in western Germany. Luneburger Heide was after Bergen-Belsen. This was again a place with no food, because it was in the middle of nowhere. The Germans had in their train compartment, they had food. But nothing for us. They wanted us to die. They didn't have any orders to shoot or to do anything, so they starved us. And there were deaths. I don't know how many-- loads and loads.

Q: YOU SAID THIS WENT ON FOR DAYS?

A: Oh, this went on for seven days, eight days, a number of days.

Q: JUST SITTING ON THIS MEADOW?

A: Sitting there having nothing to do. At night we had to be in our cattle car, and in daytime we could be outside.

Q: WHAT'S THE DATE, IS THIS STILL THE WINTER?

A: This is winter still. This is February 1945.

Q: HOW OLD WERE YOU AT THIS TIME?

A: In '45 I was 30. So one fine day we went again in our train, and we went to Porte Westfalica, which is in the west. I don't know exactly where it is, but it is a small place. There I worked only a few days, 700 feet underground, where they had put also machinery to make radios, in a salt mine. There was an elevator going, but we were not allowed to go on the elevator. We had to walk stairs into the salt mine and walk up again-- outside of the 12-hour work and the walking to our barracks-- this on top. But there ' again, as I said before, at that time I didn't feel anything, Nothing phased me at all. It was no strain, and it was nothing, only thinking about, how could you do that? To be walking, to be working, and going 700 feet down and up-- that's a lot. But we didn't stay there long, because

again, the war was closing in on us, so we went to another place, Bendorf. I was together with this group with which I came from Holland, but on the train there were also a number of Gypsies and other people who were evacuated, and also non-Jewish Polish people. When we were in the Luneburger Heide, I remember very well those Gypsies took parts of dead bodies and made a fire, with rubbing two stones made a fire, and cooked a piece of meat. That was the first time in my life that I saw that-- cannibalism. All these Gypsies had all knives someplace. In Bendorf, I remember very clearly, we were very close to these Gypsies, and we were more afraid of the Gypsies than of anybody else really, because with the Germans, it was at that time, they were so eager they get orders from high up to kill us, or otherwise they left us alone. They knew at that time already that the war was going bad for them, so they left us pretty much alone. But the Gypsies were the ones we really at the time thought were the dangerous ones, because they were after humans.

Q: AFTER WHAT POINT WAS YOUR GROUP FROM REICHENBACH TOGETHER WITH OTHER PEOPLE?

A: I think from Trautenau. They came from all parts then, they came from different camps. I was still in the cattle car with the people, but there were also some Gypsies I remember. We were just pushed in, but they came from different areas. But I always found these people with whom I was together from the beginning. So from Bendorf, where we didn't work, I remember just being put into-- it was not a barn-- but some big place, empty place. They just didn't know what to do with us. From there we went to a suburb of Hamburg, Eidelstadt. We were also in barracks, whatever it was, nothing to work. I, looking the way I looked, and another girl were for this barrack ordered to take the dead out every morning. We just had to go and had to look who we thought was dead and take him-- one on the head and one on the foot-- put him out. There was a big pile of dead bodies. We just threw the body on it, on that pile. We decided who was dead. Maybe sometimes

the person wasn't really dead yet. There we didn't work. We heard the bombs fall around us. On the way also, we passed by Dresden. When Dresden was bombed, we could see the flames all over. We were standing, the train was stalled, and we could see the flames all over.

Q: WAS THIS ON THE TRIP TO THE SUBURB OF HAMBURG?

A: Yes. At that time it was a total chaos already with the Germans. They were afraid that this was the end for them. So in Hamburg in this camp came the Danish Red Cross in uniform. They looked at everybody and selected the people who could walk, and I was among them. The Germans said, "You are lucky, you are going to Denmark." We heard only afterwards that they selected people who were still in fairly good condition to exchange against German prisoners of war, who were in-- I forget where they were-- not in Denmark, maybe in England or maybe in the United States, I don't really know. I know only that it was against German prisoners of war-- so many prisoners against so many prisoners of war.

Q: WHEN DID THIS OCCUR?

A: This occurred in the end of April 1945. I came to Denmark on the 29th of April, 1945. It was a few days before the war was over. We came again in a cattle car and were going to the Danish border. Somehow, you knew you are going to be liberated, and on the other hand you didn't know whether at the last minute they are not shooting you. You didn't know. But you didn't care either. But all of a sudden, the Germans left the train, and here we were in Denmark, and we were under the Red Cross. The Red Cross took care of us. The first thing they did, gave us some food. The food was devastating to most people, because the Red Cross people didn't know-- they gave us whatever it was, I don't remember anymore, but whatever it was was much too strong for their stomachs to tolerate. Many people in their weakened condition got sick, so sick, and died. From there we went to Malmo in Sweden on a boat, and the first thing they did

was take our dresses, which were full of bugs, and burned them. We were taken in we were covered with whatever. And that was the liberation. There was a school where I went to, and most of the people with whom I was there again were Dutch people, and we were six weeks in quaranténe and taken care of.

Q: IN WHAT CITY WAS THIS?

A: In Malmo, Sweden. We were taken care of by Swedish doctors. They all came, I remember still, in gowns, covered from top to toe, because they were afraid of typhus. Many people-- I had typhus also. Everybody had something, was sick. But the medication they had was all totally wrong, because they said afterward, they never studied. Any physician studies a little bit of emaciated bodies, but not the way we were. They had never seen this in real life. All the medications had to be thinned in order to be administered. Then the quarantine, after six weeks, I had some contact with an uncle here in San Francisco. I remember the first time when I was holding a pencil in my hand, it was as though I had never written before in my life. A man came to that school who was Danish. He lived in Sweden, but he was originally from Frankfurt, from my hometown. There was another girl and I, and over the PA somebody said, "Is there anybody from Frankfurt here?" I went and I didn't know the man, but I introduced myself, I remember, and he knew who I was, he knew my family somehow or other. He asked; "What can I do for you?" I had nothing, absolutely nothing-- not a comb, not a brush, not a toothbrush, nothing! We were issued by the Swedish Red Cross things, but he brought this girl and me a few things which we didn't have, and he asked, "Can I send a message to anybody?" So I asked him, "Can you send my uncle in San Francisco a message telling him that I was alive?" My uncle in turn informed my other relatives in New York, so it was known I was alive. I stayed in Sweden for six months. I had to wait until I was cleared by the Dutch government, because I was not a

Dutch national, in order to go back to Holland. In Holland my sister had come from Bergen-Belsen already, and we had to wait until the American Consulate opened and we could get our visas to the United States. It took me a few weeks, and I was as good as new, I must say. The only thing is my hair didn't grow, and I went to a dermatologist. He said, "Oh, you probably have a tendency to be bald." That's what he said! These people had no idea about an undernourished body-- the hair doesn't grow. My nails didn't grow, not in years. This all ceased totally. But these people just never had the practical experience. They had maybe one passage in their textbook where it said something. Normally who sees a body like this? Now when I see these pictures from Cambodia, that's what it reminds me of. It's the same kind of thing. But the only thing is, they also had people chasing them with guns and killing, but at least they could flee. There was no choice for us. Once we were caught, that was it. Very, very few people would escape from Holland, but for a sum of $100,000 a person, you could buy yourself free. But not that many people had that kind of money in 1940, 100,000 U.S. dollars. I know a few who got out of Holland. They were escorted to Portugal where they went by boat, not to the United States-- to Cuba. In fact, we had also a visa to Cuba, but the Germans didn't let us out after the Germans had invaded Holland. My uncle here in San Francisco bought it. When I think about it, it was for four people, $1,000-- $250 a person for a visa to Cuba-- lost. The Germans didn't let you out. But if the Germans got money, like this $100,000, then they would let you out. And there were other certain things, for instance you could buy yourself into getting into Bergen-Belsen by delivering diamonds. Against diamonds you could get into Bergen-Belsen. That was a preferential camp. It was the only one. Theresienstadt was a camp when you were a World War I soldier, or things like this. When you did something for the country you could go to Theresienstadt. They were privileged camps in a way.

You could die there easily, but they were called privileged camps. I was only in work camps, and probably I would not have survived it any other way. If initially I would not have gotten to Sught, I would never have survived it. I would have gotten to Westerbork. I would have been sent to Poland. Once this was out of the way, it was more or less up to me. Once I didn't get into the gas chamber, it was up to me, more or less. I could have gotten sick, but if I didn't get sick, I had a chance to survive. The gas chamber, that was beyond me. But once I was in Auschwitz and I knew I was registered, I had my number, there was something I could fight for, because it was not out of my hands. So that's more or less what I have to say.

Q: IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD? WE WERE TALKING BEFORE ABOUT HOW THE EXPERIENCE HAD AFFECTED YOUR WAY OF THINKING.

A: Yes, mostly religiously. I am totally anti-religion today, totally, one-hundred percent. I do not even attend any holiday. When I'm invited, I absolutely do not go, consciously. I do not go to any temple, not at any time, not on any day, because religion didn't do anything for me when I was in camp. When my children were small, I did things I felt I had to do for them, but afterwards, I haven't been a member of any temple or anything at all. I'm interested in Jewish affairs in Israel, because if it wouldn't have been for Israel, all these people from North Africa, or the ones who came from camp-- I don't know what would have happened to them. But that has nothing to do with religion. Religion for me is absolutely something I cannot-- it has no place in my life, and this definitely had something to do with the camp. That's about the only thing I would say where I feel strongly, that this has made a change in me. Otherwise, I didn't have that much when my children were growing up, so I don't think they have that burden the way this was described in Time Magazine.

Q: THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

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