This interview was video-recorded and simultaneously stenographically recorded on August 26, 1992, for the Oral History Committee of the Holocaust Library and Research Center of San Francisco

INTERVIEWEE: MAGDA SILVERMAN

INTERVIEWERS: ELLEN SZAKAL

JUDY ANTELMAN

VIDEOGRAPHER: LAURIE SOSNA

---oOo---

MS. SZAKAL: Today is August 26, 1992. My name is Ellen Szakal, an interviewer with the Holocaust oral History Project in San Francisco.

Today I will be speaking with Magda Silverman, and assisting is Judy Antelman, and behind the camera is Laurie Sosna.

Magda, I would like you to begin with your childhood, the members of your family, and describe, if you would, all your memories of that childhood.

A. Well, I was born in a small village called Pavlovo, which was in Czechoslavakia, and as far as my memories go, when we were six years old -- when I was six years old, we moved to a small town, where there were -- there were schools, because I

had older brothers and they had to go to -- to middle school and high school.

Q. I forgot to mention, we need to know your date of birth, and please mention the members of your family, including your mother and your father and your siblings.

A. Okay. I was born August 17, 1928, and I had -- okay. My parents -- where do you want me to start?

Okay. I had a brother. His name was Chaim, who was born in 1921. And then I had another brother, who is Harry, who was born in 1923, and a third brother, William, was born in 1925. And I was the fourth child, born on August 17, 1928.

A sister, whose name was Rodzie, she was born in 1932, I believe, and a very young sister was born in 1940. Okay.

Now when I -- when I -- because -- when I was six years old, I remember we moved to a town called Svalava and started -- because I remember I started first grade in that school, and we were a very large family, because I had a lot of aunts and uncles in that town.

I went to -- went five years to Czech public school and then went -- Hungary occupied our

territory. I switched to another school, which was sort of a Russian school, and graudated in 194 -- 1943.

At that point I couldn't go to any further education, because there was a quota for Jewish children. Maybe -- actually it was -- down there it was equivalent to high school, but I just couldn't get in, and of course in 1944 we were taken away to Auschwitz. But prior to that, I remember a very happy childhood, spending every summer in my grandmother's house in a village called Izwar (ph.) and just small-town holidays, knowing everybody in the town, a lot of cousins, and I don't -- really I don't remember any anti-Semitism, unless maybe a peasant girl would call you Jewess.

But in 1942, '43 already they did take away permits from Jews as far as Jewish stores were closed and a lot of men, many able-bodied men of military age were taken away to forced labor camps. I remember like my uncles and cousins were taken to a forced labor camp.

And -- well, I do not know. Do you want me now, starting at -- starting from the time of the concentration camp and all that, or do you want me to go back a little more?

Q. I'd like -- do you have any memory of your years prior to six years old?

A. Not really memories, not really much, just an incident where I cut my finger.

Also -- yeah. Well, I remember the village very well where I was born, because I used to go back. It was very close. It was maybe like 20 kilometers, 25 kilometers, and everybody knew each other in that region because somehow there were intermarriages, friends, because they lived there for many, many -- our ancestors for many generations, I guess.

I just remember things like going for wild strawberries and mushrooms and things like that. I don't know what else would be of any interest to you.

Q. Tell me about your mother and your father. What were they like?

A. Well, my father was in the lumber business actually, and he wasn't home the whole week, because they -- he had to travel a distance when they were cutting down forests. It's the Campadian Mountains (ph.), a very nice region. And as far as their families, my father comes from a family where there were ten brothers and my mother

comes from a family there were 14 children. Fourteen actually. There were 13 brothers. My mother was an only daughter. And all I know is we were a very happy family and a very close family and the holidays were very important, visiting each other. I mean, everybody lived within walking distance. There was no public transportation, so...

And what else?

Q. Well, what was the mix of religions? Were there many more Gentiles, or was it mostly Jewish?

A. I couldn't tell you exactly the proportion. All I remember is most of the Jews lived on Main Street and they were small business people. Mostly businesses. The doctor was a Jew. The pharmacist was a Jew. The bakeries were owned by Jews, because the local people were mostly peasants. The only other ones were like the office workers or teachers were -- again, I could not tell you if it was under the Hungarian time or the Czech time. They -- I had a lot of girlfirends. They were people -- many -- they were Orthodox or -- or there was Conservative, which it would be equivalent here to Orthodox, because as far as in house, it was kosher. There was a dairy sink, there was a

kosher sink. Well, not a sink like now but -- There was wood, but it was a separate table. It was just a life that you can't even compare to a life here. It was a small town. There was one movie house. There were a few factories. There wasn't even a high school in town. You know, if somebody wanted to go to high school, you had to travel about five kilometers to another town.

Well, my happy memories are really spending every summer in my grandmother's village, but actually there was only one Jewish family, my grandmother's family, in that village, and they were also in the lumber business. And the whole family actually -- and I revisted that -- that village. Of course it changed, because they rebuilt it. But I found the house. I found the river. I found the -- a lot of familiar places and -- well, until 1944. They were we were all just taken away. And of course maybe our parents knew something about it, but as far as the children, we didn't know anything. We thought they were taking us to -- to -- to Germany, settling. Do you want to know anything else about --

Q. Who were your favorite relatives?

A. Right now?

Q. Who were they back then, do you recall?

A. Back there.

Q. Cousins or aunts.

A. There were so many of them. There were my father's brothers and my mother's brothers and cousins, and we are still very close with my relatives here. My cousin, we survived together in a concentration camp, where we were, and whoever is left, we keep in contact. In fact we get together every holiday, Rosh Hashana, by the way, in Great Neck, and by now we are already about 40 people, because this is -- my uncle is the only one that survived that is alive, my mother's youngest brother and --

Q. And his name?

A. His name a Louie Goldstein, and he really keeps the family together. They just had their 50th wedding anniversary.

Louie -- everybody loves Louie. And actually he is my grandchildren's great-great uncle, and we just had last summer our grandson's bar mitzvah in Santa Fe, and Uncle Louie came, so it was a big honor for a great-great uncle to be there.

Anything that I missed, that I left out

that you would like to know?

Q. Do you recall any special foods that you ate or songs that you sang? What did you do to celebrate and -- I'd like to hear more about --

A. Okay. In those days in order to -- to prepare for Shabbat you had to clean the whole day Friday, because there were wood-burning stoves, so you were baking and cooking, and as far back as I remember, there was no shortage of -- just before -- until just before 1942, '43 already, there was rationing but somehow we always -- there was always enough to eat, because we had our grandmother in the village and you had fruits and vegetables and everything.

But as far as favorite foods, well, there was baking done on Friday, cooking. What was really very nice was every Friday night the table was full with candles, because in those days there was a custom whenever there was a newborn child or a diseased person, you always added a new candle, a candlestick on the table, and it was very nice because the electricity wasn't on and the table is full of candles, so 'til my father came home from temple, we used to read storybooks at the table, because it was a nice light.

Anything else?

Q. How would you -- how would you call yourselves? Were economically comfortable? Rich?

A. No. I think about middle class. Most people were middle class. It was -- the house we lived in was a four-room house, kitchen, a living room and two bedrooms, but in those days you had two children sleeping in a bed. There were two beds. Even in the living room there were like beds that opened up, and if company came, there was always plenty of room for them. One slept on one side and one on the other side, and there was plenty of room for everybody.

Q. I'd like to know about your mom.

A. My mother?

Q. Tell me about your mother.

A. Well, I remember -- still remember her face. In fact everybody says I look like my mother. So when I look at a video and I see myself in profile, somehow my memory of my mother comes back, because even in my childhood, they say I looked look my mother. She had six children. She was a good mother. And there was different upbringing in those days. I guess being I was the first girl after three boys, I guess maybe I was spoild in a way, and

she was very loved by her brothers. Again she was an only sister. She had about three or four single brothers that just came to our house for the holidays -- and I don't know. To me somehow -- my mother was 42 when she perished and somehow I do not know -- I guess we always remember our mothers as being older, and that's what I have to say about my mother. My mother -- you can even talk about your mother when she's not here.

Q. What did she like to do? What did she do?

A. What did she do? Oh, she was a good cook, a good baker. In those days we always had help. There was always a maid, because the maids were very cheap. Just like if you go to Mexico here. Years ago you got maids very cheap. And she crocheted very well. Embroidered, crocheted. You had to crochet and embroider if you wanted to have things. You couldn't just go to the store and buy the embroidered tablecloth and pillow cases.

And all I know is that she was busy the whole day. Just you had to clean the beans and peel the potatoes and everything took a long time to boil, even though you had help. But the help just did all the heavy work, and it took forever to cook

the beef. There was no such thing as broiling. You had to boil the beef and bring the -- the chickens or the geese, to have them slaughtered, to the -- what do you call it? Shocket. And clean it and soak it. So I remember my mother was always very, very busy between cooking and shopping -- well, we were a big family.

Q. Was there any traditional dress?

A. No. No, there wasn't any. All I remember is that for the holidays we always used to get new shoes, especially for Passover. New shoes and a new dress, and the dresses of course had to be made by a dressmaker. You had to go for fittings. And in the last year already it was very hard to come by fabrics, so they used to take my mother's coat or somebody -- my uncle or somebody else's coat and reverse it. You know, there were two sides to the fabric. And make out of it a new dress or new coat for the winter. We had pretty harsh winters. I remember there was a snowfall and all winter you didn't see the ground. You just saw -- it was just snow. There was snow.

What can I tell you? I had a lot of girlfriends, and things weren't that bad when I grew up in that region. There was plenty of food

and in our own way, things were all right.

Q. Can you describe each brother and sister and your relationship with them.

A. Well, it's hard for me to remember much, because my oldest brother died -- by the way, he -- my oldest brother died when he was 15. There was an epidemic of meningitis, a meningitis epidemic, so when he was 15, I -- I have to figure it out now. He was born 1921. He was seven years older than me, so what was I? Eight years old. And all I remember is tragically my mother was looking out the window and then my aunt's maid came to bear the -- the sad news. That was the custom, that a Gentile person was coming to tell you about the sad news, because he was in the hospital in another -- in another larger town. And he was -- he attended what they call -- if you -- if you're familiar with a Hebrew gymnasium, which was a very prestigious school, and he was -- so that was a very very big tragedy for my parents.

And then there was my second brother, who by the way, is a survivor. Him and myself. And he was five years older than me, so you know how relationships are between a brother and younger sister. I wanted to take away his things, and he

reprimanded me.

And then there was a third brother, who again died of -- about two or three years later, of a tyhphoid epidemic, so he also died. So that was again going through the same tragedies. That's my mother had -- when she lost two children, she had that last child. She was a little girl. A pretty little girl. And both my sisters went with my mother in Auschwitz.

Q. Were you close with them, your sisters?

A. Yes. Yes. Again we were very young, and especially the little one, I remember I used to take care of the little one. And we were a very, very close family, because we slept in one room and so -- anything else? Any other...

Q. Can you tell me about school, your school prior to 1939.

A. All right. Well, I started in the town that we moved to, Svalava. I started in the public schools. I went five years to Czech public school and then I -- then when Hungary occupied our territory, I went to a Russian school.

We lived right near -- near -- right next to the school, and as far as I remember I was a good student. But like I said, unfortunately I couldn't

go to any of the schooling in the war years. And then we came back after liberation. I was in Germany, and I came here and started a family, which of course I had always had a complex that I never finished any higher education, but I have -- raised a nice family instead.

Q. Did you receive any special Jewish training?

A. I did -- I did receive, yes, yes, for -- I don't remember how long, but it was called batyach (ph.) school after -- in the afternoons. I went a few times a week, where we learned to write Yiddish and read the Siddur, which I forgot already.

Q. Which reminds me. What languages did you speak?

A. I started Yiddish, and my parents spoke Hungarian, because they grew up during the Austro-Hungarian, so Yiddish was spoken in the house, Hungarian was spoken in the house, Czech in school and in the street. There was a Ukranian -- it was similar to Ukranian, Russian. It's a slang. And then when I switched to this Russian school after five years of public school, I started forgetting Czech and -- and learned Russian. And the second language was Hungarian. So there was a

little bit of everything in our region. German was spoken. And of course throughout the years I've picked up some other languages. Russian, Polish in the concentration camp. So there was a little bit of everything. Nothing perfect. And the same thing is now with English. I mean, I understand a lot of languages, which I could somehow communicate a little bit if I have to. And -- but primarily my parents spoke mainly Yiddish and Hungarian.

Q. Prior to the war, were you conscious as a child of being Jewish, of being different?

A. Of course. Of course. Because, first of all, very traditional upbringing. I mean, the holidays, Saturdays, Passover. We had to bring down from the attic all the dishes, the Passover dishes, and they were -- we couldn't just go into the store and buy Manischevitz or Goodman matzohs. It was done in a cooperative vein, and the woman used to get together in a place where they used to make the dough and role the matzohs. Everybody chipped in. And then I remember that we had a whole wooden box of matzohs in the attic about a week or two weeks before Passover, and then you had to prepare special some things for Passover, and from the village I remember my grandmother used to send boxes and

boxes of, because again there is nothing ready made. You just -- it was eggs and potatoes and you used that to make matzoh meal, and that's what you had for Passover. And it was a big thing for us, the children, because of the seder and the changing of the dishes and the scrubbing of the house, and everything had -- the chomotz had to be burned, and then the same thing, starting on -- on Shavouth, after Passover, where we used to decorate the house with flowers and -- and lilacs at that time. I think the lilac trees were in bloom at that time. And then on Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kipper we used to bake and cook, and they were very observant as far as the electric light wasn't put on by the maids and the fire wasn't -- there was no fire and so on. So Friday night, Saturdays were very -- very observant and there was a very big Jewish -- I mean, a very nice Jewish population in town, so it was real traditional in a modern way, I would say. Like you see sometimes in the movies from Poland where there -- there were a group of people that wore the -- what do you call the white stockings? Like -- and those hats, the fur hats. There were a group of some people, but our family was considered more modern. My mother had her own hair and she didn't

wear a wig, shakel.

That's -- and I don't know what else I can -- can remember.

Q. Did you have Gentile friends?

A. Yes. Yes. I had a lot of Gentile friends. Friends that I went to school with, used to do my homework with. In fact, the one friend I met on this last trip, and she just was very excited to see me. I had a lot of Jewish girlfriends and quite a few Gentile friends. I had Gentile neighbors. My mother was friendly. You know, very friendly. And fortunately, with all the misfortune we had -- we didn't have any pogroms. We had a different life than in Poland or Russia. So there are happy memories, good memories, until all of a sudden, the sky just fell down and -- just everything was just taken away. I mean, everybody was killed. Let's put it this way. Just the younger cousins remained alive.

Q. I was curious to hear -- hear about how you celebrated birthdays. Do you remember birthdays being special?

A. Birthdays, they're not -- not very popular. I remember I had my tenth birthday, because it was something for all the girlfriends to

have tenth birhtdays. Nothing -- nothing was not -- even gift-giving was not that popular, because we just couldn't go out and just have a selection like you have here. Even getting gifts. I don't know if it's traditional to give wedding gifts. I was young and I don't remember.

The only thing is on Hannukah I used to get money, Hannukah gelt.

Oh, again I had -- I had single uncles and they used to come and always just give us money. We went out to the candy store or to the ice cream store. I remember an uncle buying me like a ski outfit, which was a big thing. Skates. Not -- gift-giving was not -- I do not remember it being very important. I think it was -- books. We used to rent -- borrow from the library, school library, so there were no special book stores or when I was younger. Toys maybe, but there was not -- not plentiful of that stuff.

Okay. Anything else?

Q. Would you describe the town, this second town that you actually grew up in, as rather provincial or urban?

A. Well, I don't know. How I can -- we can compare it -- you can just tell you what -- there

were two temples. There was -- there were, I think, two doctors. There was no hospital. There was a pharmacy. There was a movie house. There were about two or three factories and there were a lot of small stores. I think there were about two, three hardware stores. Everything was on one main street. I'm trying to think how -- what other town can you compare it with here? There were three churches. There were two apartment houses. The tallest was was -- maybe there were two or three houses, two-story houses.

Schools. There were maybe three schools in those days, because only up 'til ninth grade, which they called a -- I think probably the equivalent to junior high school here, ninth grade, and in those days that was a pretty good education, because, you know, the subjects were compulsory, and for higher education you had to go to the next town, which you can -- somebody went to the gymnasium, which was almost like -- almost like a college degree. The curriculum was equivalent almost to college. So that gives you an idea of the town.

Q. Were there any cultural events?

A. Well, as far as I remember, there were --

no. There was touring theatre. I know gymnastics were quite popular, stemming from the Czech -- we used to go evenings to the gymnastics. Even our school had a very beautiful gym. All modern equipment. Just the movie house. There was nothing -- well, there were events in the wintertime, ski races, nothing really that you would call cultural.

Don't forget, this is going back how many years? I don't even think they had -- this is going back 45 years, more than 45. Forty-seven years. So things are different probably now. I don't think then they had it in the small towns. As I noticed, now the town grew. It was built up. There was quite more going on.

Q. So as a child, what were some of your favorite activities?

A. Well, my favorite activities were -- well, there was school. There was after-school play. I remember I used to love going to the gym, and of course to go see the movies. I used to ice skate on the river, and on a Saturday night, even the main street, the snow was packed so tight that we were skating right there. That's where everybody used to come Saturday night, when -- you know, when Shabbat was over, and we used to go

skate there or sleigh riding. And -- but my happiest times were the summers, which I used to spend at my grandmother's village, because it was fruits and berries and mushrooms and playing in the river and fishing and things like that. And there was one big room where several grandchildren, you'd sleep in one room, at least six of us. And practically every summer, we used to spend every summer there, and even during winter vacation.

Q. You mentioned movies. Who were the favorite movie stars then for you?

A. I remember we started -- started collecting -- cutting out movie stars from magazines and putting them in a book. I don't even remember in those -- who was it? Was it Greta Garbo at that time? I think all the stars that were in the '40s, early '40s. I couldn't tell you exactly which ones they were.

Q. Were they American?

A. American, yeah. Yeah, American. Mostly American, yeah.

Q. When did you first hear about Hitler, do you recall?

A. I couldn't tell you exactly. I couldn't tell you. All I know is that we used to see the

Hungarian -- what do they call it? -- porerhorti (ph.), because they were Hungary at the time, and whenever there was a national holiday, we used to have to put his pictures in the window, flags. It was compulsory. And children from school, we used to go parade.

I really don't -- as far as Hitler, I don't remember. But I know that everybody was always discussing politics, especially when they used to go to temple. That was the center of discussing politics, so my father used to come home always and I heard this and I heard that and the Russians were advancing and the Germans were surrounding Moscow. So, you know, there was -- there was -- even though they confiscated radios from the Jews at that time because they didn't want -- or they sealed it or something, but the news was coming through, because the Hungarian newspapers of course were only writing probably propaganda, whatever was -- what they wanted to write. But there was news, and unfortunately we didn't know what was -- as far as what was going on in Poland and we were constantly talking about it, that it was so hidden, Auschwitz and all these camps, that we were bordering with Poland and Russia and yet no news

came through. Our -- there was a few people that were hiding in our area from Poland, and they were telling of these atrocities, so I remember everybody said these people are probably crazy. I mean, we didn't believe it. We didn't think such a thing -- we didn't believe such a thing existed as extermination camps or that there were camps and they were killing people. We didn't -- we didn't know -- as far as I know, I didn't know. Maybe my parents did know something, but they didn't want -- they didn't want us childrne to know about it.

So when -- just before Passover 1944, every Jewish family had to register, and the Germans marched in to our area just -- I think it was a few weeks before Passover, but they were friendly Germans. These were the Weirmacht (ph.). They were apparently getting closer. It was the fighting, the front was coming closer at that time in '44. Certain areas already were liberated in Romania, in Poland, and they were very friendly. And just a day after Passover, they started gathering the Jews. They put us -- put everybody in a temple, and of course they told us just to take along as much as we can carry, and we marched to the temple and stayed there overnight and slept on the floor, and then the

next day they took us to the next town, which was a brick factory, and we were there for about four weeks, and of course with the cattle cars to Auschwitz after four weeks, but again we didn't know where they were taking us. They told us they were taking us to camps, working camps, to Germany, to Hungary, so as far as my generation, we didn't know. We didn't know what -- what was ahead of us.

Well, I was about 15 and a half at the time, and the reason I survived, I guess, I was developed. Most people 15, 16 were going to one side and the others -- children were going to the other side.

Well, should we go back or go forward?

Q. Well, I would like to go back, if I may.

A. Yeah.

Q. To 1939 at the outbreak of the war. Hungary took over Czechoslavakia?

A. Yeah.

Q. Your part of the world.

A. Yeah.

Q. Do you remember that day?

A. You'd be surprised, but it wasn't a sad day, because my parents grew up during Austro-Hungarian, and Austro-Hungary was good to the

Jews, so they said, Gee, Hungary, it's -- it probably is going to be good, because Hungary had a lot of food. There were -- fruits were coming from Hungary. Geese were coming from Hungary. There was very -- Hungary has very fertile land, and everybody was -- nobody was upset about it. And -- 'til a little bit later, when -- you know, it was getting already war time, so there were certain shortages. There was certain rationing. But somehow -- I don't know. Our family always managed, because I remember the family was connected with Budapest, and I remember members of our family, cousins, uncles, were traveling to Budapest. They were doing the lumber business, dealing in the lumber business with Hungary, so they used to bring back things from the big cities, whether it's factory bricks or shoes.

As far as food, we had plenty food because in the villages there was -- there was agriculture. There -- there was enough food. Toward the very end, I remember already there was sugar rationing, flour rationiing, but there -- somehow we managed. There was enough because we had -- my grandparents on my father's side had -- had land fields in another village, so my mother used to go there. We had sharecroppers and and she used to

go in the fall and they used to plant corn and potatoes so there was enough, and pumpkins. And what else do I remember?

So there was enough conrmeal, there was enough potatoes for the whole winter. And you had potatoes. We always had a cow for our own needs, so there was butter, and there was milk and -- and also my mother had a vegetable garden near the house. So -- I'm sort of getting away from one thing to another.

Q. That's fine. Was there restrictive movement in any way?

A. I think toward the end, yeah, so then going back, what really started going badly is because when they drafted all the -- the young men to a forced labor camp, and they were not in military uniform but they wore a yellow armband and they were cleaning up the -- the fighting front where the war was going on, so a lot of these men fell into prison to Russia and it was hard, because I remember I had one aunt with small children and you have to -- you have to make a living, so the family, one was helping out the other. There's no such thing that they were getting compensation from the government. And I remember another uncle. From

time to time there was some correspondence but -- so those were hard times. And as far as my father, he was drafted, but only for a few weeks and then they released him, because he was already above drafting age. Actually he was -- he was about 52. Fifty, let's say, at the time. So there was a cutoff age. So then those were already harder times.

Q. These men were taken prisoners by the Russians?

A. At first they were taken into -- they were in labor batallions under Hungarian supervision, but as they were fighting in -- not fighting, actually cleaning up the fighting front in Russia and Poland, they fell into Russian -- most of them into Russian prison. A lot of them died because there was no food and it was the winter. In fact this uncle, my Uncle Louie had all his toes cut off because they were frostbitten. He fell into prison, and ironically the Russians did not make any exceptions because they were oppressed Jews. They just treated them as any other prisoners. What really saved him is I think he knew Russian. He spoke Russian.

Q. What were the yellow armbands? Were they to show they were Jewish?

A. Yes, to show they were Jews. Instead of a yellow star, they were in civilian clothes and they wore yellow armbands.

Q. Did the Jewish civilians have to wear any identifying --

A. Yes, we had to wear -- if I remember, stars for a short while, because as soon as the Germans marched in -- I couldn't tell you exactly when -- it was for a few weeks or just for a short time -- we had to -- and there was a curfew to the very end, the very end, just shortly before they took us away, and we had to wear a yellow star. And then things were very -- quite bad.

THE VIDEOGRAPHER: We're going to take a break.

(Recess taken.)

Q. Go ahead.

A. All right. Where did we leave off?

Q. We were talking about the one thing you remember, wearing the insignia that indicated that you were Jews, and when that happened, and then the curfews. Tell us about the curfew.

A. The curfew was like any curfew. We had to be in by a certain time at night, and things were getting to be very tense, because here and there you

heard of incidents, and this was mostly religious Jews with beards, this one was beaten up and that one was beaten up, but no -- no major killings. And maybe I did not know, maybe I was sheltered. I think it was my fortune. Luckily my father was home, my mother was home. He was past that age, for slave labor camp age.

But I couldn't go back to school. So what happened at the time already that -- you had to do something, so I remember I -- my mother arranged with the seamstress. I was learning how to sew, and a lot of my friends did the same thing. That's -- that came in handy. It's coming in handy now, knowing how to sew a little bit.

But still there was -- there was still the holidays. There was still the temple. And all the other relatives were there, so the whole thing was -- we always felt the family was together, whatever is going to happen to one, we're -- at least we are together. And we were together. We were taken away together.

Q. Did you witness any beatings?

A. No. No, because it's -- I don't remember. No.

Q. Were you ever personally threatened?

A. I don't recall. No, I don't recall. Our immediate neighbors were all right. I mean, the local people. These were only people that came in, I guess, Nazis from Hungary. They called them Black Shirts, which took over all the offices and police.

Q. When did they come in?

A. Probably like that last year, just -- probably in '43, '44, because we were taken away in April of '44, so -- and things were bad because there were not even many doctors anymore in town because the war was getting closer and closer. There was one doctor that was drafted. There was only one doctor in the whole town, because I remember I was ice skating and I broke my wrist. This was winter of '44, and there was no doctor so by the time they -- my mother took me to the next town, it wsa about two days later, and my wrist started mending, and they had to break it again, and my mother wouldn't let them break it, so it just grew in. And there were some hardships of course but nobody was killed. In our own homes we had food to eat.

Q. What were the hardships?

A. Okay. Actually hardships. Jews were not

allowed to have any maids, only secretly. That I remember, because we -- there was a lot of hard work. You had to heat the stove with food. There was a cow. There were chickens. So water -- there was a pump outside. So you had to haul in water from outside. And in the wintertime the pump froze, so you had to leave at night hot water and boil it and pour it in the pumps. So that I remember. But we had a neighbor, a Gentile woman, who used to come in and milk the cow because my mother couldn't, wasn't able to milk the cow, and help with the housework. In fact, I met our neighbor's daughter. She still lives in the house across the street, and she -- she remembered -- she is about two years younger than myself, and she remembered me and my sister and the whole family, and she said, I remember when you used to bring in white bread and change it, because black bread -- peasants only had black bread, and she remembered that her mother worked for my mother. So those with the hardships. And there was oppression from the local government but --

Q. What type of oppresion?

A. Well, first of all, there were no Jewish businesses anymore. If you wanted to buy rice or

sugar, it was all on the black market. You had to go through the back door. And everything was done secretly.

I don't really remember anything else That's it. We were always very jealous that all my Gentile friends were able to continue school and I can't go back to school and yet they were stupid and apparently I was smart at school, and I -- I felt very badly that I couldn't continue in. That was actualy for about one year because I finished school in 1943. And in fact when I met them after the war, I came back to my home town after the war -- we just came back to see what's going on there, and I met them. And they went to school and here I was just a survivor.

Q. Were you with Jews, physically separated?

A. Physically separated?

Q. A ghetto, a ghetto area?

A. No. We were together. Families were together for about four weeks.

Q. You didn't have to move into a -- a certain area for Jews?

A. No. Well, yes. Well, they took us away, I told you, right after Passover.

Q. No. I mean at the beginning.

A. No. No. We stayed in our own homes. No. There was no ghetto. That was for four weeks that we stayed in a -- like in a brick factory, because I guess the trains were so busy going to Auschwitz that we had to wait for our turn to go to Auschwitz.

Q. Other than business, were the Gentiles restricted from or prohibited from interacting with the Jews in any way?

A. No. No.

Q. What about dating and --

A. Oh, mixed marriages were very rare in our area. Very, very rare. I do not remember of any -- any mixed marriages. That was -- there were no intermarriages, let's put it this way, in those days, no. Only here.

Q. Was it sort of taboo for a Jewish person to marry somebody who wasn't?

A. No, not -- the authorities didn't prohibit it. I mean, there was no -- it wasn't taboo. Interesting -- Well, I'm going to sidetrack. I visited now on this trip back a family where the woman is Jewish and she married a Gentile man, and she was taken a away -- well, let me go back. My Uncle Lee (ph.) was a teacher and his -- these were

two of his friends. She was Jewish and he was Gentile from my town. A Jewish woman married a Gentile man and had a child with him, an infant, but when they took everybody to the concentration camp, they took her away, and the Gentile mother-in-law hid the child, because they were looking for the child too. They wanted to take away the child. She came back from the concentration camp, and they live in this town where my uncle is in contact with them, and we visited them on our trip back, so this is one incident where there was, but it was very, very rare where there was -- there were intermarriages. And in fact most people are kosher, and if they were maybe two, three families that weren't kosher, everybody knew about it. But once or twice they used to come for High Holidays to the temple and they traveled on a Saturday, which of course we were forbidden to travel by car, and that was the general upbringing in those days.

Q. You mentioned you were forbidden to have radios.

A. Yes. Well, radios were -- I think they were confiscated. It was toward the very end. So people shouldn't listen to foreign news, I guess. They were like sealed down. I think they put a

seal on it. Only a certain station. Only you can get a certain station.

Q. What about newspapers?

A. Oh, there was plenty -- not foreign newspapers, but local newspapers, and, you know, in the local newspapers, Hungarian newspapers, all you had is propoganda. There was always a lot of that, because Hungary was collaborating with the Germans. And though there is -- I don't know -- maybe you read about it, where Hungary didn't want to release the Jews, but they were forced toward the end to give up all the Jews, because we were like the last transport. It was a matter of nine months that our families perished, because in January '45 our area was liberated by the Russians, so from April 'til January. A short time that we would have held out or the Russians would have come a little faster, if it would have -- we all would have been here. Not only I would be here.

Q. Talk about Hungary giving up their Jews. Do you know what happened there?

A. Only what I maybe read now after. I couldn't tell you much about it. It's -- the Hungarian chancellor, Huti (ph.), I guess, even toward the end, he -- I understand he was under

house arrest because he wouldn't collaborate with the Germans, but I guess they overpowered him and they did get the Jews. And also there was a time about in '4 -- '43, 42, when again they requested Jews and Hungary didn't want to give up Jews. This is what I -- I mean, I read about this, so Hungary started a law that everybody, every Jew, has to produce Hungarian citizenship, and there were a lot of poor Jews where they didn't -- they had no papers. They didn't know where -- they couldn't trace back their ancestry. And there were a lot of people that were there that were maybe of Polish ancestry so they were gathered and they were sent -- I don't know if you ever heard about it. They were sent out to Poland and they never came back. They all perished in Poland. A lot of families from our town. If I remember, they were taking them to the railroad station and took them to Poland and they just -- I don't know how they perished, but they had taken them to camps there, and this was one way for Hungary of releasing Jews, so this is how they did it, by requesting Hungarian citizenship, and those that couldn't were taken away. They demanded so many, so many Jews. Like I think it was -- what what was it? Eichmann or one of those German

leaders. It was one way, but then of course they weren't satisfied and later they wanted the rest of the Jews.

Q. Did you lose any personal friends that way?

A. In Auschwitz?

Q. No, in Polish --

A. In the neighborhood. I remember neighbors. Yeah. In fact a woman came back. I don't know how she made her way back. And again everybody thought she became insane. Yeah, I knew some people. In fact a very close, close family, because everybody knew each other in town.

Q. Do you recall the day they were taken?

A. I don't remember exactly the date. But --

Q. How about the event?

A. Yeah. I remember like they were -- we saw them going to the railroad station and they were just -- first they were taking them to an internment camp, to Budapest somewhere, but I don't know where they took them.

Q. Were they fearful or --

A. Nobody was really fearful because you didn't know that you were being taken to the

slaughterhouse. Nobody knew about it. Nobody knew anything.

I remember this incident. We were taken to Auschwitz. We were in the cattle cars and there was a man, a refugee from Poland who was a relative of somebody in our town, and he was looking out the little opening in the railroad car -- I found out about it later on -- and he saw the way the railroad tracks were going, that they were not -- supposedly they were going to take us to Germany, and he knew already they were taking us -- there was a town called Katovicz and other towns, and he knew that those tracks were going to Auschwitz, because he knew about Auschwitz because he escaped from Poland, so -- because I heard about it afterwards, that this man kept quiet but he did mention it to somebody that he knows where we are going.

And I met a woman recently. In fact I met her in Hungary. She knew my family and she said she was on the train and she met somebody that knew her who volunteered into the German SS and he told her, Let me save you because you don't know where you are going. We didn't know. And she said, No, I want to be with my mother. I'll go wherever my mother goes. So we were very ignorant about it. We

didn't know anything. Just thinking we were going to some camps because they felt the Jews were not politically -- not -- they were sympathetic maybe with the Communists, with the Russians, as the Russians were approaching, just as they did here with the Japanese, I guess. That's probably what we thought that they were doing to us.

Q. Can you recall for us the events which led to your deportation and the emotions attached.

When did it start?

A. Well, I guess it started just before Passover. We still celebrated Passover. They left us for the eight days and all I remember is that night the bakery started working. Everybody was running to buy bread because -- in fact maybe the rumor started that something is going to happen. So everybody felt at least let's have some bread, because matzohs -- what are you going to take for after Passover? There's nothing in the kitchen.

Q. What did they think was going to happen?

A. Again just taking us to some camps. We didn't know. We didn't know what was going to happen.

Q. Was there fear or excitement or --

A. Well, first of all, when they approach

A. No, the Jewish community. I don't think -- but we had a Gentile neighbor that did send us a package, I remember. Sent us some food. They were allowed to at one time.

Q. So your initial leg of this trip was to go to this place, this collection place?

A. This collection place, yes.

Q. A different town?

A. They didn't have any auditoriums. Oh, there was -- I guess in brick factory they used to keep bricks, because I remember there was -- there were two floors, and we took along with us whatever we could, some bedding, I remember, so everybody had a little like a room like this. Maybe there were two families. We all had a little place where we spread out our things and slept there and this was -- and as far as I remember, all my girlfriends were there. Boys were there and girls were there. When you are young, you don't think of -- young people used to gather together and talk and you try not to think of anything -- we didn't know what was going to happen. And I remember my mother got very sick and my mother was working in the kitchen. I guess the parents had quite a burden.

Q. So you were there with -- there were four

you and they tell you just you have to part with all your valuables, you can only carry -- take whatever you can carry, so what do you take? You take children, you take a change of clothes. And I remember my -- my cousin was about to get married so in those days you hired a dressmaker and the dressmaker was there for days and making -- preparing the hope chest. So I remember my aunt gave everybody -- all the girls to put on the beautiful embroidered underwear, one layer, another layer, as much as we can take with us, have it on us, and nobody was prepared. We didn't travel like you travel here. You have you luggage and there you travel, you bundle up like you must have seen some of these pictures, just take a big bedspread or whatever and bundle it and everybody carried whatever they could, of course, whatever food. And those four weeks when we stayed in a brick factory, that was kind of a ghetto. There was a communal kitchen and there -- they -- there was enough food, because the town that we -- they put us, they still -- there they had a ghetto. It was the town of Nunkatz, and the community from there used to send in food, so there was food.

Q. Did the Gentiles --

siblings and your parents and all your aunts and uncles?

A. Three siblings. Three of us, Harry, Rodzie and Erica and myself. Four of us, yeah.

Q. How did you get from your town to this factory?

A. By train.

Q. Were all the others Jews?

A. Yeah, by train, they took us -- kept us overnight in the temple. We slept on the floor and then went by train, because it's only like 25 kilometers was the next town.

Q. And were you highly guarded?

A. Yes. Yes.

Q. Do you remember that trip?

A. The train was a short train ride. The train ride, I don't remember. But I remember that brick factory, which we called the ghetto. We went in the railroad cars. We walked to the railroad cars, and that was where -- the cars that went to straight to Auschwitz. Railroad tracks.

Q. I'd like to know about those four weeks, sanitary facilites, people's emotions.

A. I couldn't tell you. There was an area set up for hospital. I remember there was some

barrack there for hospital because there were -- already there were some people who were nurses and there were sick people who were taken to the area. There was a kitchen, so we used to go with our pots and and pans, whatever, to the kitchen and bring some soup. We had -- apparently we were able to take along with us some food. I had an aunt in that town that did send us, I remember, a dish with some food from time to time, because she lived in the ghetto, and in the ghetto they lived in their own homes. The ghetto was surrounded, but she stayed in their own home so they were still able to prepare stuff. And there was nothing, nothing going on.

Q. Did you have privacy?

A. How could we have privacy, where you are -- your living quarters are just as much as you can -- you can spread out two blankets myabe, or one blanket, and we slept next to each other. I mean, everybody slept together. Privacy, there was no -- I don't remember that we were able to take any -- There was no baths and there were no showers. I think we used to go there in the courtyard and maybe wash up. I don't remember much about having bathrooms. There were probably latrines, five of them for so many people. Many people were just

pushed together. Just like you have a hurricane, right, and you -- you have a big place and people sleeping next to each other, but a hundred times worse, because all pushed in together, and they give you soup from the soup kitchen here at least.

Q. How was the soup?

A. I don't remember. How was the soup? Well, when you're hungy, you eat.

And I guess the food was sent and in still by the Jewish community from the town that was a little bit freer to move around in their ghetto. Some Jewish agencies, they were getting organized.

THE VIDEOGRAPHER: Sorry. My microphone is going out. I just need to take a quick break.

(Break.)

MS. SZAKAL: Q. Were there any songs?

A. Songs? No, just -- well, at Purim we all used to get dressed and go from door to door and say something that's appropriate for Purim and -- just like you go trick or treating here. So that was a big event. And on Hanukah we used to play cards or dreidl and light Hanukah candles and the thing that we did -- we had latkes on Hanukah and there were other things -- it was in the wintertime

so we had of course geese that they used to force feed, so we had goose liver and gribbenes. I don't know if you know what that is. And baked potatoes.

Q. Czechoslavakia is famouos for its dumplings. Did you have dumplings?

A. My mother is a Hungarian cook, so she -- she did make other things. Of course she baked very good cakes, coffee cakes, and of course on -- besides that, on Purim there's a very big -- you know, things are coming back to me where we used to bake all kinds cakes. Again we used to call it kichel (ph.). They used to call -- I remember all kinds of cakes, so of course, if you know what shaloch mones is --

Q. Tell us.

A. Shaloch mones is a custom that my mother used to set up several of her cakes on a plate and I used to bring to it my aunt. We had several aunts, so there were several trips. In return my aunt used to send back her cakes. It was like samplers. And then I'd go to the other aunt, and in the meantime I used to get some sweets for myself, and then I used to -- one aunt -- there were several aunts, and by the end of day, the table was set up with all kinds of cakes, so that was a very, very

good holiday. Very good feast. And they were all cakes from scratch.

And so that was -- that was very -- very nice. Besides that, we used to go from door to door so we used to get from people candies and money for saying some Purim poems.

Songs? Only songs from school that I -- in Russian. Russian, Hungarian songs. Choir. We had performances in school.

Let's see now. What else can I tell you?

And again on the the High Holidays one of my aunts lived right across the street from the temple, and my parents were praying. Like the whole day they were in the temple. So of course, you know, children would get hungry so they used to prepare us a little snack and I used to go in with my father, because the woman were upstairs and the men were donwstairs, and my father had a bin. You might see it here in the old temples, maybe very old temples. Every man had a bin where he kept his tallis and siddur. So I used to keep it there, and then when I got hungry, my sister and I used to come and take it out and go outside and eat it or leave it at my aunt's house, tell our parents that we were home from temple, and of course children were very

popular in those days, and on Friday we used to bring in certain things. You're maybe not familiar with cholent. You put it in a claypot and put it in on Friday -- it's like a -- like slow cooking. And then Saturday, on the way home from temple, you pick it up. You carry it and take it home. Actually it's practically a whole meal. It has beans and meat and what you call kasha, derma, and -- so I remember those things. And of course after dinner, that's siesta time. Of course the children used to play outside. And after that, everybody gets up and it's visiting time. Young people used to go meet young people, and their parents used to visit. Happy times. It was a very large family and everybody knew each other. So we had no T.V. We didn't have any fancy toys, but we were happy. We used to play games with walnuts, like similar to bowling, where you set up the nuts and then you just roll another nut and whatever you knock down is yours.

Q. I'm curious, what is the difference between Hungarian cooking and Czechoslavakian cooking?

A. Hungarian coooking is -- if you'll travel and go to Prague and Budapest, you'll find out. In

fact our daughter was in Hungary. She just came from there. She went to Prague. She said the food wasn't that good. Czechs are very limited and Hungarians, first of all the cooking is outrageous, just very good and very tasty cooking, and the difference -- that's the difference. Czechs use a lot of pork. There's pork in -- the national food is cabbage, dumplings and pork, so the dumpling is actually like a raised dough, yeast dough, and you boil the yeast dough and then just slice it in slices and then that's their national -- and then in Hungary there are all kinds of dishes, so supposedly it's good food, Hungarian food.

Q. Is there a difference between Gentile food?

A. Yes, because the Gentiles use a lot of pork and the Jews didn't use any pork products. So there is a difference. Gentiles will make stuffed cabbage and put sour cream into it, and the Jews wouldn't. Or they make goulash and they'll put sour cream in it, and it wasn't kosher and people are not allowed to put any -- any sour cream.

Q. You spoke about tracing family history. How far did your family go back?

A. Well, as far as I know, I am named after

my mother's grandmother, my great grandmother. Mala (ph.).

And also -- I don't know -- I don't know the name of my great grandmother. Joey (ph.) would know. In fact we just put together a family tree, which is stretching out from one end to the other, because my mother coming -- my mother's side had 14 children, and of course everybod's in it, all the deceased families and the living and everybody up 'til now, so it's a very interesting family tree. And my uncle had his 50th wedding anniversary, my aunt and uncle, so everybody who came got one. They made copies. And it was just -- of course my children have copies of the family tree.

Q. How far do you go back?

A. Just as far as my grandparents, because there was enough. There were 14 children. And then everybody had a large family. I know my uncle was from about ten -- nine, ten children, and the other one, five, six.

There's nothing -- nobody only had two children. So it's -- at the present time we have one, two.

Q. Let's go back to the brick factory. How did you -- what do you recollect of your feelings at

this point? You were 16?

A. 15 and a half, I guess, because my birthday is in August, so I wasn't 16 yet.

Well, what do I remember, my father working in the kitchen, my mother had terrible headaches. They might have been migraine headaches. She wasn't well. And I was busy meeting friends there. They were friends, people that we knew from the other town, our friends and their friends, and we were just sort of congregating, the young people together, and just living from day to day, waiting to see what's going to happen to us. We even had hopes that they might let us go back home, but -- that's about all that I remember, really.

Q. Were there rumors?

A. There are always rumors, you know, all kinds of rumors, even -- when I'm coming from concentration camp, there were rumors that they saw this one there and they saw this one there, and those people are dead. They're exterminated. And yet there were rumors -- someone said -- Oh, someone came over and they said they saw my mother working in another camp in the kitchen. So there were always rumors. There wasn't much that I remember, just living from day to day and eating and sleeping

and waiting to see what would happen.

They took us away on the trains. We still didn't know where they were taking us.

Q. Was your mother able to care for your sister Erica, your baby sister?

A. I think I had to take care of her because my mother wasn't well. I remember she had very bad headaches. At that time they said that you had -- well, they called it something else. They didn't call it migraine. I probably watched my sister, and there was the sister, who was about three, four years old, my other sister, my brother, my father.

Q. Was anybody mistreated by any of the guards?

A. Again somebody had said that somebody was beaten up out in the yard, but I don't -- don't recall of any details.

Q. Do you recall the news -- receiving the news about what your destination was going to be?

A. Uh-uh. No. We were just -- because we were told -- they did it systematically, and everybody was taken away at the same time. I don't remember how they did it, but we had to just pack up our possessions, whatever we had there, our bundles, they just took us for the next trip.

Q. Do you remember the date that you left?

A. Well, I remember just going to the trains. They were right near there. I guess it was convenient, because they were transporting bricks at the railroad, so the train tracks were right there, and all I remember, it was a sunny day and we were just getting into the cattle cars. That's all I remember.

Q. And whom did you go with? Who were you with in the cattle car?

A. Family. We always tried to stay together. As much family as -- family. And it was people that we knew. Everybody knew each other. It was -- it was a small community.

Q. Did you help each other in or were you helped into the cattle cars?

A. Yeah. Well, there was -- yeah, we were -- you can just imagine.

Q. Did anybody ever try to escape?

A. You mean from -- from the cars? From the cattle cars or from the --

Q. Factory.

A. Factory? I don't recall. I just -- to tell you, very few people went into hiding because it came so suddenly. We weren't prepared for it.

And some way we always felt whatever is going to happen, the family wants to be together, what's going to happen to my mother and father is going to happen to me. We didn't want to be separated.

I know of a family in the next village and we knew the family very well, because, as I say, everybody knew each other in that region somehow, and they went into the forest to hide. There was a mother, father and two daughters, but then there was some anti-Semites, again some -- some of the Hungarians, and they hunted them and they found them and they shot them right in the forest.

One of the relatives came after the war and tried to find them, but this person went away. He didn't find them.

Now when we were visiting, you know, passing through that village, a man who we were talking to was telling us about it, and he said there is a gravestone, so this is what happened.

We just know then of a another man and his brother, who was again in the lumber business, and we knew he knew the people back in the forest, the peasants, and he was in hiding. He survived, but very few people were able to hide.

Again I know of a another incident where

a maid took a child, and he survived, but very, very few did because it came very, very suddenly. We didn't expect -- and again in a big city it was easier to hid, because neighbors don't know each other. Here everybody knew each other, so in a small town, in a small village, they always know, because it would have to be a secret, and it wasn't done.

Like I said, my family was in the lumber business. They were cutting down lumber, deep, far away in the mountains and in the woods, and we could have doe it maybe, but we weren't prepared for it. As I said, most of the young people, most of my cousins survived. Most. Not all of them. The younger ones didn't. Just most of them that were above 16, 17. Well, some died in concentration camp after, but being from such a large family, there was still -- still a few left.

Q. How many first cousins were there? Did you ever count?

A. Oh, I could -- could count right now. All I know is that when we came together, there were about 45 of us, but this is already second and third generation, and then of course I have some cousins in Israel and some are in Vienna. Well, let's see.

Where else? The one from Spain moved back, so -- and some older ones died already.

Q. So while in the brick factory, you still were unaware of the extermination camps?

A. Yeah.

Q. And you did not know anything?

A. At least I didn't know anything.

Q. And then you were told you were being resettled to Germany?

A. To Germany. We were going to work, to be settled. And really, it came as a terrible shock, because we weren't prepared for it. We didn't -- never thought we will be uprouted. I mean, for so many years in the same house in the same place in the same region.

Q. What was the date that your journey began? You know, when you were taken.

A. Well, when I look back on the calendar, it was right after -- right after Passover.

Q. April?

A. Yeah, April.

Q. 19 --

A. I have it written down somewhere because I had my papers. I have exact dates. But right now I don't recall the dates. It was right after

Passover.

Q. Can you tell me about the train ride and how long it lasted.

A. I don't remember how long it lasted. Probably -- well, figuring from the region to Auschwitz, if you do it now, you could probably do it in a couple of hours, but I think it was overnight at least that you had to sit, because there was so many trains coming from other directions from different places. So I don't -- I don't remember. We were just packed in. And there was a pail, what you call a slop pail, and at certain stops I think they gave us water. We had some food with us. It was slow, because it -- we made a lot of stops and stops. And of course there already everybody was very depressed, because we were packed in the cattle cars.

And -- well, then we get to Auschwitz, and you must have seen several movies where it was done. You come out, and there was of course Mengele. You heard about him. We didn't know his name at the time, but these German officers and then a lot of prisoners in striped uniforms, helping out, and of course nobody is going to tell you what's happening but if they saw a mother and a

good-looking, you know, young girl, they tried to pull -- pull away the young people from the mothers, and the mothers didn't want to let them go, but they knew what they were doing. They were Jewish prisoners from Auschwitz pulling them away, you know, you go on this side, and grabbing them away, and many -- two of my childhood friends didn't survive because they stayed for their mothers. I guess the mothers wouldn't let them go. But these men tried to pull away as many -- of course there was Mengele here, left, right, left, right, but they tried to pull people away and of course --

Q. What was the physical setup when you --

A. When we arrived?

Q. Yes.

A. Well, I remember my father looking out and we saw chimneys and smoke, so they thought it must be some factories. They're probably bringing us to a place to work, to a factory, because they said they were bringing us to work, to working camps, and it must be factories. And what they did, the Germans, is they had music playing, a band playing. They were prisoners, musicians playing right there, so it was very camouflaged. It was -- and then we were separated, and that's it. Marched

to -- do you want me to continue with this?

Q. Yes.

A. Marched to a place, what they call zauna, where there were showers and beds, and we were stripped and they shaved our heads of course, I had on me layers of underwear which my aunt gave everybody, every young girl in the family to put on. Maybe you'll save it. Some people had some -- had hidden some valuables with them, but you had to strip completely and shave, and they gave you camp uniforms, striped dress, I think. I don't remember if it was at that time striped or -- and they just let you keep your shoes. And we were again marched to a camp. We still didn't know what was going on.

And then there were prisoners who were there already for about a year or two. Of course they were already the managers in the barracks and still we didn't know what was going -- we didn't know if the other side was taken away to the gas chambers, because they didn't want to frighten us. Later on we found out, but we still wouldn't believe. We wouldn't believe it because it's things you can't believe.

And then, if I remember, after a few days they took us to work again. We had to be marched to

work to a different area, a different camp. Of course we went to be tatooed, which I have that too.

Q. Can you show that to us.

A. Yeah. The person who did it was very neat. You probably saw some of them were quite -- quite big. And it started fading years ago, but it's still there.

Q. What is that number?

A. 8-5807. Many, many years, ago, I had some skin problem, eczema, and I went to a skin doctor and he offered to take it off without any charge, and I just said no, it has to be -- I have to have it there.

So anyway, we were working, and then later on we were transferred to another camp, which is supposed to be a very good position, right next to the crematoria, where they were bringing in all the clothes and everything. We were sorting it out. The advantage was that we were able to put on under the camp clothes warmer underwear and warmer clothes and we were secretly able to eat what we found. We were sorting out the valuables. People came with bundles and there were all the valuables. Everybody took along some canned foods, dried food for the trip, and we were sorting out, so when we

found foodstuff, we were able to secretly take it away and eat it, so we had the goodies and, like I say, it was a privileged -- privileged place to be. The other workers said -- old workers said right next to us there was a crematorium, but you just becomes sort of -- I do not know how to describe it -- numb, and just you go on from day to day. You're alive and you just -- nobody committed suicide there, hoping always that things will be over, and -- and maybe we'll be reunited with some members of the family. We didn't believe that they all died. I felt maybe my father, maybe my mother, somebody was spared, taken into the labor force. So I was working there again with most of -- a lot of my cousins, because they did it alphabetically, and there were a lot of people from my hometown, so they were familiar faces. So we didn't starve. We had clothes, we had clean barracks, and from time to time there were selections. I do not know if you know what selections are. We had to line up and when a German official came, you -- we found out already something might be wrong. They call it selection, selections, and they select people to go for a different transport, or the ones that were very skinny or didn't look so healthy, they take

them away for crematoria, but somehow those things didn't happen because everybody was pretty healthy-looking because we had enough food, the soups that they were cooking, plus mostly the food that we found in the -- in the luggage. Actually our job was -- later on they allowed us to wear kerchiefs because they -- according to barracks. There was a barracks where you were sorting out shoes separately, because everything went to Germany. Shoes separately. Clothing separately.

And, like I said, they allowed us to wear some regular clothes and kerchiefs on our heads, because we were shaven, and every barracks had different color kerchiefs so they should know, so it wasn't 'til -- we were there 'til January 'til the Russians approached, and also we witnesssed -- I don't know if you read about it, but there was an uprising in creatoria. It was in the -- I read about it in the Jewish Weekly, because we get it also in New York. The Jewish Chronicle, Jewish Weekly, whatever it's called here. And we were there when the uprising happened, because the fence was right -- you know, right near us where we heard the shouting, and they started singing the international hymn, and it quieted down and they

took us all out in the courtyard to line up. Whenever there was any trouble, right away they took you outside. They took a count, because that happened twice a day, where we had to line up outside, because they always tried to see nobody escaped. They counted all the prisoners and we were -- we were there when the uprising happened. And of course they killed them all and all the remaining, they took them, and of course they killed them off.

And we used to -- actually we knew somebody that was working in the creatoria, a cousin of mine. Somebody else knew somebody, so we -- we secretly were able to throw things over the fence for them, some foodstuffs tied in a little bundle, and of course we made sure there were no guards watching.

So then from -- in January, once the Russians approached -- and in between they used to select -- people used to volunteer to go away from theere for different -- the rumors were they took you to Germany to work at different factories, so people at that time knew they wanted to get away from Auschwitz to go to Germany to work at factories, so people used to volunteer. Sometimes

it was for the better and sometimes it was for the worse. They asked for volunteers to go for another transport.

Well, what else? Well, from time to time, some beatings. Somebody was -- some beatings occurred if they found on somebody some jewelry or something that they found and -- there were day shifts, there were night shifts, because the transports were coming without stopping. You had to sort out all the clothes and everything. Well, it's -- well, let me just tell you about this, that the best -- the best job in that camp when we were there was the woman who was taking care of the latrine, and she was a Polish girl and she was -- because we were mixed. There were so many languages, because the previous -- the earlier prisoners were Polish, Slavic, whatever, Dutch, French, all nationalities.

So anyway, going back to this woman -- woman. Girl. She was in charge of the latrines, and that was the best position, because in the latrine we were able to cook some food and of course everybody had to give her something. One thing we found in the packages, there was some raw rice or raw something, and that was a delicacy, so I remember we had candles and we used to put the

candles in a -- in a can or something, lying the candles down and taking another can or find a little pot and cook on top of that pot, so we were actually families in groups. That's how -- I was together with two of my friends. They were second cousins. We were like a family. Then my other cousins were in groups of threes or fours. One did the cooking, one found the food. And so this is how we were able to look after each other. So -- or we used to -- some of the workers had big potatoes from some other camp, and potatoes was -- that was a very big thing. You were giving away a piece of gold for a potato, so of course you had to go to the latrine. There was an area there. And you couldn't cook it there. There was always somebody watching, and as soon as they saw that, somebody was coming, they were putting everything out.

So that woman had the best job.

And of course the girls that were there for two -- excuse me. They were there for two years, for three years, and they had better positions. They were foreman, I recall, kapos, and some of them were good, some of them were bad but -- there was -- I remember one girl who was a kapo, and of course in order to win the Germans' favor, she

had to show the Germans that she was very tough with the prisoners, so I remember she -- she slapped my cousin for something. She didn't stand straight or something. But I know after the war, some of these people were hunted and some of them were found and reported and the Israeli government usually dealt with it. But some of them were terrible kapos. Whenever -- I haven't seen -- I didn't see it, but I've heard they killed, just to win the -- win the favor of the German SS.

Well, okay. Now going back to January, when they evacuated Auschwitz, we were on -- we marched. It was January, winter. And that's -- it was winter, a lot of snow. And we marched and marched 'til we came to the nearest railroad, which was about two or three days. Again our fortune was that we were not under-nourished and we were able to prepare warm clothes, because we knew things -- the Russians were approaching and thruogh some certain information -- some people were able to get information, that worked for the Germans, so we had double, triple socks. We were allowed to take -- take coats, but not long coats. We had to cut them down. And enough underwear. Kerchiefs. So we were dressed warm from that -- that particular place

where we worked and this way -- that place was called -- they called it canada (ph.), because they said canada had an abundance of food and everything.

So it's called canada. And that was our fortune again. Also we were able to -- to save some food for the trip and carried it in a little bundle, but there were plenty of cases where people just fell down and then of course the Germans just shot them anyway -- it -- but being we were together with our cousins and friends, when we sat down to rest in the snow, one didn't let the other fall asleep, because once you fell asleep, that was the end of it. So we -- we supported each other 'til we came to a train station, and we were somewhere in cattle cars, oppen cattle cars, and they -- they took us to Germany.

Where we first came, if I remember, was Malchof. The name was Malchof. Just we were sitting there in the rooms, doing nothing, trying to get some food in the soup kitchens or whatever.

Then they took us to another place called Ravensbruck, which was a pretty infamous place called Ravensbruck. Again we weren't there too long, and then they took us to another place called Leipzig, which was where we worked in a munitions

factory for a very short time. I remember the barracks were very clean and we were getting soups and the whole kitchen -- it apparently was parsnip, and to this day, whenever I smell parsnip -- not parsley. There's such a thing as parsnip. I can't stand parsnip because the soups were probably made out of parsnips. And then apparently it was getting to be already the end. Then again we were marching, what they called forced marching. This was already in -- in the spring, just before liberation, before D-Day, and then again we were marching and then we had the guards and then we slept -- slept outdoors. Sometimes they took us to a barn and then they got some boiled potatoes from the farmers and then they were -- in Germany they kept sugar beets in a -- not in a cellar, in a heap in the fields. It was covered with dirt and we knew about it, so secretly we went, and of course I remember this one -- certain incidents you remember, where the guards started shooting, and we just laid out flat, and the girl next to me was killed, and for me, I was meant to live.

And again marching, marching and farmers here and there were feeding us, and we were eating raw potates, whatever we found, and then all of a

sudden, the guards disappeared and we saw some white flags in the villages, so we were left without anybody. So we were used to somebody guarding us, so what do we do now? We were again -- we were in groups, helping out each other, and we just walked and walked and came to an area called -- it was bombed out. A place called Grima and it was near the Elba River, and we -- and all of a sudden there were other prisoners. There were Italian prisoners and the Yugoslav parisans that fell prisoner, and interesting there were Italian prisoners that -- I don't know how much history you know. There was a General Bodoglio, and he formed an army against the Nazis and they were fighting against the Germans, and of course they became prisoners and French prisoners, everybody somehow congregated, so we started -- we went into they were bombed out houses but the cellars were still intact so we were living in to those cellars and waiting to see, for some authorities, because the Americans were on the other side of the Elba River. The bridge was bombed, and we wanted to go of course to the American side, but they wouldn't let any prisoners, only some very sick people, because -- so the bridge was bombed, and you had to go down a ladder, up a ladder, so I remember

there was a girl who had a broken leg. She wore boots, so that held her leg together, and they allowed her to come over.

Q. Who is "they"?

A. The Americans. It was no -- nobody occupied that area, but in the meantime again we need food, so we used to go to the German farmers, especially the men, and the Germans were afraid of them, of the Yugoslavs, and the farmers gave us food and we were cooking outside 'til the Russians -- I guess it was decided that the Russians took that territory. And then they took us to a camp the Russians were overseeing and the Czech -- every nation, I guess, sent buses, sent buses to pick up their people, and we were considered Czech because -- and I don't know why, but anyway the Czech rescuers came and picked us up.

Q. When you disembarked from the train with your entire family -- I'd like to go again to the physical setup. How long was the ramp? Were there lights? Were there dogs? How were you -- from whom were you separated? Was their chaos? Can you describe that?

A. All right. Don't forget that we were in those trains I don't even remember how long, but it

might -- could have probably been one night, two nights, in very close contact, one on top of each other, with no toilets, no -- so when they let us out in the fresh air, you are dazed, you don't know what's going on, and all they tell you is schell, schell, women here and men here. Men separately. Woman separately. And separating us. Go this way, march this way. It just happened very fast, and you are just dazed. You're hungry. Probably you want fresh air. You are -- there are dogs. There is music, there is -- so we're marched away to the zauna and and the zauna is where they disinfect you, they shave you, they shower you.

Q. Did anybody hit anybody?

A. I don't remember. I don't remember.

Q. At what point did you see -- do you remember Mengele? Do you remember --

A. Well, there were -- there were tall, good-looking -- I shouldn't even use the word "good-looking." It must have been, because he was there at every selection, Mengele. Later on we saw already movies here and pictures. It must have been him. There were a lot of SS, as you've seen, well-dressed and very tall and very -- at that time I don't think they tried to beat anybody up, because

they didn't want people to panic and to run and to do that. They didn't want any chaos. That's why they tried to have music and peace, people should go peacefully, because later on, when I worked in -- in this place called -- they called them kolemsezinke, and we saw all the Hungarian transports coming in, and then we knew already they were going to the crematoria. But you become numb. You just -- you don't do anything. You can't do anything about it. You see these -- it just becomes like an everyday, everyday happening. Like I said, nobody committed suicide. You just hoped that some day you'll be liberated, and while you are in camp, you wish -- we kept on saying just to sleep on a wooden floor and be free and just eat a piece of bread and drink water, just to be free, and we hoped that some day we will be free, and like I said, if I have brothers and sisters that somehow survive.

Q. Was this ramp -- there was -- this was a ramp --

A. I don't remember how we got off.

Q. Do you remember seeing a gate or an entranceway or --

A. Oh, there was -- there were signs, something like that. They said in German "Arbeit

Machtes Leiber Frei" and trying to keep people quiet and disguise everything, disguise the whole situation, and I remember when I worked already in the kolemshezinke, a very good place, they asked people, volunteers, who can sing, who can play an instrument, because they performed either to entertain the Germans, the SS, the guards, or just fool people. And also, like I said, we lived through terrible nights, hearing things at night, because there were other camps, you probably know, where they had selections very often, and they took them with trucks to the crematoria, and these prisoners knew they were taking them, so we heard during the night trucks and screaming, so just you lived through all that. And, you know, just hearing that and those Gypsies, they were taking them. Sometimes they did it and they were so busy they'd be sorting them in the daytime. We didn't have to hear it. We saw it. And sometimes you wondered that you can function, but there were years and years when I had nightmares, and things were pretty good up to this visit again where things came back to me this summer, and the funny thing, while I was here, I did not even tell my husband because it was where I had the same kind of nightmare where they

were taking you and they were exterminating you, you know, those kind of nightmares, and trying to live a normal life.

Q. Describe what you saw.

A. Where?

Q. When you said you actually saw people going into the gas chamgers.

A. A truck, they used. They didn't -- well, transports. They were just walking, children and woman, or men. These were mostly -- because the last transports were from Hungary. Everybody else was taken care of. They were just walking and walking, and we are just coming out of -- because we had the privilege to be able to go every second night or so to take showers, because we were -- we saw people, transports, coming out from the zauna, from the -- whatever they call it, the place where they were taking showers and shavings, so we just saw these people. We were fortunate because we remained alive, but there were so many people just marching in groups to the crematoria, but these people didn't know that they were going. They were told that they were going -- they were taking showers, just like we were taking showers. And the only thing is that we had to sort out clothes also

that was brought back from the crematoria, where in a hurry they had to undress the children. So you could see the underpants and socks was all together, and to this day, I hate to -- when I get undressed, I hate to pull off my -- everything together, because it just reminds me of if you're in a hurry, the undershirts and the shirts were all together, we had to also sort out those clothes, and we knew they were clothes that were coming back from the crematoria, clothes from the valises, and they were still warm, because the Germans tried to save that so also they wouldn't burn the clothes. So I'm going to take some sleeping pills tonight, because I talk about this.

Sometimes when we get together with, you know, friends, you remember we did this and we describe the menu and when we did this, but not anymore. We don't talk about it anymore. We felt it was enough.

Q. When did you -- did your mother and father perish?

A. Yes.

Q. When was the last time you saw them?

A. When we were evacuated -- when we got off -- out of the cattle cars. That's the last time I

saw them.

Q. Did you have any words?

A. No. No, because we didn't know. It was done so fast.

Q. Who was with your mother?

A. My two younger sisters, because they only allowed the older -- older. Not older. Like teenagers and younger people that were able to work. Those were left alive.

Q. Was there any resistance?

A. No.

Q. Did you witness any resistance?

A. No. No. Anyone who resisted was shot immediately. I didn't see any resistance. Like cattle, that's how people were. You know, people were tired and exhausted and they were just like cattle to the slaughterhouse.

Q. So people basically were obedient.

A. Yeah, as far as I remember. Yeah. And the thing is that there's no -- I remember we came already to the the showers. There all of a sudden you lose your modesty, because men were working there where they disinfected you and cleansed you. It's like nobody -- modesty just disappears. You were not embarrassed to undress in front of men,

walking around naked. You just become like a -- like a zombie in a situation like that.

Anything else?

Q. How far did you have to walk to the zauna? Was it in a different camp or --

A. Well, the zauna was -- we had to walk and walk and walk. We had to walk. I don't remember how much. Actually I think that the zauna was not far from the -- from the trains. I think. Because I know it was near the crematoria, so it was not far. They arranged it so that people shouldn't have to walk too far, because I remember when the trains arrived we did see the chimneys. So it couldn't have been -- maybe several blocks or so. Not that terribly far, because there were a lot of older people, children. You know, everybody had to walk.

Q. Did you ever hear of Birkenau?

A. That's where we were.

Q. This was in Birkenau?

A. Yeah. Birkenau. Auschwitz/Birkenau, that's what they call it. They call this part Birkenau now, but I think it's part of Auschwitz.

Q. When did it become clear to you about the gassing, do you recall?

A. Let's see now. Well, either we were told

about it later on by other prisoners, the previous older prisoners that were there longer or -- and then we really found out about it when we were working near there, and then we heard about the selections, that they selected people to go there, which was -- it was very frightening whenever they told us to line up all of a sudden in the middle of the day, and German officers, the bigshots, came around to inspect. We were right there.

Q. Did you feel personally in danger?

A. No. I mean in danger of what?

Q. Of going to the gas chamber?

A. No, because we were not under-nourished, and then we heard that they only take sick people, people that are of no use to them, people that can't work. They take those away. Because we worked in an area where we were needed. We worked and we weren't starved, and clean. So at that point we were not really threatened. But you never knew when you were taken away for a transport or they were liquidating the camp or what. When they were liquidating you never knew. Maybe they would just take everybody to the gas chambers. We just -- at the time we just lived like a condemned person. There was no way out. We didn't know when the day

would come when you would be liberated or you'd just be killed.

And again at that time, like I said, we were young. You know, at that age -- I don't know if you can visualize how a 16-year-old mind works. Maybe you just -- I don't know. Maybe you just don't have the fears. You just go along with the tide. I mean, you have no choice.

Q. Did you witness or yourself experience any beatings?

A. Yes, right there if they found -- if they found somebody -- there were some girls and there were some men and occasionally maybe they found them with a man, and then of course they were -- there was maybe a beating or just slapping, like the kapo, which was not -- not in that place where we worked. Thi was a very privileged place next to the crematoria with -- and the smell of the crematoria, those things. I mean, the stench was terrible, terrible there. But again you're there and you have to live with that. There's no other way. There's no escape. The same thing like I said with the parsnips, if I smell -- sometimes if there's a barbeque and there's some piece of meat that will fall into the charcoal, that's a very familiar

smell, you know, so I'm don't go to barbeques. I stopped eating meat anyway. Sorry.

Q. Did you hear cries?

A. Oh, yeah. Those were the trucks when they were taking these people to the -- because these prisoners knew they were taking them in the trucks. There were screams, but nothing helped. I mean, there were cries and screams and "God" and "Momma," you know.

Q. Did you get numb to that too?

A. Yes. You get numb. You get numb to everything. You get numb and you just become like a -- I don't know. A zombie or just what? And you just go on.

I don't know what else I can tell you about the concentration camp, except that later on when we came to -- they took us in to a camp in Germany and we were sitting in the room and of course there were pests and lices and so we we were trying to get rid of them. So that's a pastime. When we didn't do that, everybody -- each one of us started talking -- we were hungry -- about what kind of menu they would prepare if they would invite company for dinner, so you sort of drool and then -- what other incidents? I don't know what else to

tell you.

Q. Do you recall any kapos specifically?

A. Yes. Yes, there was -- there was one which I think they tried to deal with her in Israel, I heard, who was kind of mean. Mean girl. There were others that were okay and every -- every barracks had an attendant, so some of them were decent and some of them were trying to play a role with being -- having their authority above you. Nothing -- nothing special.

Anything else?

Q. Did any experiences come to mind at all during your Auschwitz experience that happened to you that --

A. I -- oh, I can't -- can't recall anything, anything special.

Q. Were you able to -- or I should say, how were you able to bolster your spirits, or how were you able to sustain yourself emotionally?

A. Nothing. Nothing. There was nothing. Just hour to hour, day to day. What really helped is that we were together and we supported each other. Like we were -- myself and two other girls were one family. My other cousin -- you know, were were in groups, so if I found something, I shared it

with them, and if they had something, they shared it with me, and we took care of each other. And this is what helped us to survive. Whether it was on that march, what they call -- they probably call it a death march, because whoever couldn't walk, fell down, and they were shot, and those are maybe people who didn't -- who didn't have anybody to help them. But like I said, we -- we helped each other. I mean people become selfish, and even if you have a piece of bread left, you hide it. You don't want to share it. But the three of us as family, we shared everything. We wouldn't let each other fall asleep. She would fall asleep for a little while and then we'd wake her up. Don't sleep too long. You're going to freeze. So that was a very big support, a very big help, that we cared for each other and we helped out each other, and to this day I have a very good feeling -- I have two sisters. They live in Los Angeles. These are cousins so --

Q. What are their names?

A. All right. Their married names, one -- well, one is Weiss, and the sister is -- I forgot her married name. I have it in my book.

Q. What were their maiden names?

A. Their maiden names were Koenisbach or

Koenigsberg. I do not remember. One of them. Their mother, my aunt, was a sister, so we were all in the family, because I had cousins. There were three sisters, so they were a group. Then another cousin was with my other aunt, so like I said, we got -- we were divided into three, four in a group and helped each other out. And that -- that was a big help, very big help.

Q. Did you ever hear of any incidents of rape?

A. No. No, but there -- but I heard of girls that were taking care of the SS in the room. They were like maids for them. And apparently there they might have maybe been intimate with them. I don't know. They -- you know, those days, just to survive, you did anything, so we heard of cases like that. And there was a case I remember one SS fell in love with one girl and then in the next transport, this girl's sister arrived, and he saved her sister. So I mean, there were all kind of incidents. But then we heard he shot himself early after liberation. I mean, those things don't even -- are not important. But rape, there was no reason, because if he wanted -- an SS German wanted a girl, he could have just had any girl. She

wouldn't resist. He wouldn't have to rape her.

But we've heard there were men prisoners and somehow the men were more capable, and they were giving us -- if we didn't have things they were giving us things, little delicacies, that they got ahold of. They worked with the Germans. That doesn't mean anything, you know. That's -- that's about it as far as --

Q. To what do you attribute your good fortune in Auschwitz?

A. Well, I was meant to -- to live and -- and again, good fortune that we were -- that we were selected to this -- to work in this place where we had enough clothes and enough food. And being together. Not being isolated and being together with friends and family, where we looked out for each other or helped out each other. I had some cousins that were in a different camp and if somebody -- you know, there was some communications so I sent her some stuff, because we had chocolate. We found something. And to this day, she remembers it, because little things like that -- or one time I remember throwing things over the fence and we took chances, but the guards were not around, so that's what -- that's why I'm here. That's why it's -- at

least there's some families where nobody's alive. I have -- my gosh, my father's two younger brothers. There were small children. Complete families wiped out. Then I had my mother's brother, who -- they were twins, so, as you know, they did experiments on twins, so one didn't survive and one survived and lived in Israel and died about two, three years ago, so that family is out. No -- there's nobody anymore in that family.

Q. Did they -- was he experimented on?

A. I don't know. Never asked him, because one of the -- apparently they were not identical twins, so I think they were mostly interested in identical twins. They were not, because the brother, one brother that we saw, he worked at the crematoria. We saw him over the fence, across the fence, and then he disappeared, so usually those people that worked in the crematoria, they always took them away and killed them and then they brought fresh people to work there, because they didn't want anybody to talk in the crematoria, to be a witness. Usually those people didn't -- didn't survive, so that's -- a lot of families were completely, completely wiped out.

Q. Can you describe the crematoria.

A. Well, I only saw a building and a chimney. That's about it. We weren't able to see across the fence. I never went back after the war, and I wouldn't go back. And a horrible smell.

Q. Was it smokey the whole --

A. There was -- there was the chimney. And also at night you could see bonfires, but they took -- it wasn't near the fence. It was bordering it. It was further away. So you could see the bonfires, because they couldn't dispose of all those bodies, so they burned them, I guess, outside. You know, a lot of people are -- are going back to Auschwitz to -- just like you go to a cemetery, because ashes are all over there, scattered, but I wouldn't go back. It's one place I would never visit again.

I visited a cemetery where I come from this summer because I -- all the years I just felt as soon as things become easy politically -- because under Russia it was pretty restricted, but now that that region became Ukraine, that part is Ukraine now, and they're very anxious to have contact with the West, Ukraines, so it's much easier to cross the border and you're not restricted. During the Russians, they wouldn't even let you visit those

villages. Apparently they had military installations or whatever, and you were only able to stay in one town, one hotel, or maybe you could visit one town, but anyway, I took the opportunity to go now, because a cousin of mine wanted to go and my daughter always expressed a desire to see where her roots come from, and my husband said he'd come along with us, so -- and my cousin. In all the years I had this desire to go back to the ancestors, to the cemetery, because I knew that both my grandmothers' gravestones were there. I didn't know about my grandfathers' because we had -- some Jews remained in that region and I had other cousins on my father's side that came out now with this new Russian immigration. Like 19, 20 years ago, when they started letting people out and they used to go every year, what they call kairarus (ph.), when you visit the cemetery once a year, and they brought back pictures of both those gravestones, so I said I have to go back once in my lifetime, because it's the only thing we have of our ancestors. Otherwise it's all ashes somewhere, and this was a big thing for us to be there. And it was -- I came back very gratified that I visited that cemetery, and I have some interesting pictures of a beautiful little

cemetery in the hillside. It's been taken care of because we support some -- there's an old man who takes care of the cemetery. And his daughter. They restored some of the gravestones. So we send money and they -- they watch the cemetery. So it's -- at least we have that.

Q. In Auschwitz, did you hear planes at any time?

A. No. Usually there were no planes, because I wish there were planes because, believe me, when we were in the open cattle cars, already, as I said, when we came from Auschwitz, we were marching on foot for several days until we came to the railroad tracks, because things were bombed already and they put us in these open cattle cars, taking us at the time to Malchof. And this is a town. And we were later on in Magdeburg, and it's a big, big, big city, and we were in open cattle cars and there's the sirens and there's an air raid, and the guards of course ran for shelter, and we wished that some bombs would fall and that it would be all over, but of course nothing happened to us. That was the only time that we experienced, you know, hearing some planes overhead. This is another story where the Allies didn't do anything. Didn't bomb.

There's so much written about it. They could have bombed the railroad tracks. They could have -- a lot could have been done, but nothing was done.

Q. Did you get any word about the outside world? Did you have any contact at all while you were in --

A. I don't think so. I don't remember. We probably heard that the Russians are getting closer and closer. It probably came somewhere from the underground, because we were getting ready for that march, preparing clothes, cutting down, you know, coats, warm coats, and preparing a little dried food that we should have for that march, so we apparently did know something. Not much.

Some of the men knew, because, you know, men are more interested in that, and they had contact with some Polish prisoners. Not that much.

Q. Did you only work with woman?

A. They were some men also, but not in our barracks. They did other -- other type of work, which again they were privileged, these men.

Q. Did you ever find any notes or any other interesting item in the clothes that you separated?

A. No. There were photographs sometimes. There was some jewelry they were hiding, but we

could not do anything with it anyway. Nothing. Nothing. Even if -- mostly a lot of albums, personal photographs. You know, people will leave in a hurry, and interestingly, you could tell from the luggage which was a rich family, which was a poor family. You know, if there was some jewelry, people probably hid on it themselves. We heard of some people finding things and they traded it for potatoes or salami, you know. I mean, it's a long time ago. It didn't -- it was of no importance for us. Just working, sorting things out. Sorting out the clothes.

Well, are you asking --

Q. Will you describe a typical day for you there. Do you recall?

A. A typical day. Okay. I remember getting up early. First there was a lineup outside in the morning. What they called -- I think they called it appell. I don't know if it's Polish of German. And then our breakfast, I think, which was probably something like chicory coffee or soup. I don't even remember, because most of the time we didn't even eat that food. We had somehow we managed to have our own food. And then go to work then. I think at noontime again, I think they allowed us to come to

eat the soup and go back to work. And then at night again there is this lineup outside, the appell, head count, body count, whatever it is. And back into the barracks. We were not allowed to go -- go walk around. I think we were able to go to the -- maybe to another barracks, because the barracks are all together. That's about it. Eat, work, sleep, line up. And go for the showers, which was right near us. I don't remember how often. We were able to take showers.

And our hair started growing back slowly, very slowly. We wore kerchiefs anyway. And that was that. And of course at night, hearing all those things, seeing transports, from time to time seeing some German officers coming back, some bigshots, whatever, coming, inspecting, checking. That's all I remember. Maybe there was more, but I don't remember.

Q. One often hears that woman stopped menstruating. Is that true?

A. Yes. Yes. Yes. We didn't menstruate, no. Again I don't know whether they put something in the food. Yet we hardly ate the soups, or I don't even know what it was lacking of something. I don't know. At times they said they did put

something in the food.

But again we eat whatever we found in the valises or packages. It's -- not fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, nothing --

After the war, my -- I mean, I can tell you about this. All my teeth -- my nerves died and my teeth turned black and when I came to this country, I had my four front teeth recapped, my upper teeth, probably for lacking of vitamins, and I had to have root canal done and fortunately we had a good dentist and it was done for me.

Again there was -- otherwise -- I'll tell you it's a good thing there was no menstruation. Otherwise, I mean, all these woman -- what can you do? And of course we lost weight. Toward the end everybody lost weight. Then we started eating starches after the war and got a little heavier.

Q. What was your weight in the camp?

A. It wasn't skinny, but if somebody was fat, they were so much in style because they said, Oh, the other person has a lot to eat. But nobody was really heavy. But it didn't matter. The only one that was heavy was that -- that girl who was in charge of the latrine. She was heavy. Everybody gave her food for the privilege of allowing them to

cook there.

Q. Can you describe in greater detail the march.

A. Which march, the winter march or the --

Q. The first one.

A. The winter March. January. It was snow. It was cold. We were just walking and walking and walking and then they let us rest because the guards were probably tired and we were never -- we were never indoors. I don't remember going into some shelter and just resting. That's when somebody fell asleep, we helped each other, not to let them sleep too long, and there were a lot of bodies to the side of the road. A lot of bodies, because people -- and there wasn't only -- only the march wasn't only from our camp. It was from -- from different parts of Auschwitz, and they evacuated the entire camp. There there were some people that were liberated in Auschwitz, and that's what I heard. I don't know under what circumstances, but they were able to hide or they did not have time to take them out. But it was terrible, because seeing those dead -- sometimes you had to step over, and you just become -- every day death was life, seeing dead bodies along the road.

But fortunately nobody from us that we knew -- except there was -- oh, no. This was later on, this incident later on already before liberation. Do you want me to tell you about this?

Q. Yes.

A. This was because there was no snow anymore. This was just -- let's see. We were liberated in May was the end of the war. May, I think. And again we were -- they didn't know already what to do with us, the guards. I mean, they didn't know. We were marching from one place to another because the end was already near. And we were resting at a roadside and the army -- German army was retreating and I guess it must have been a narrow road and two girls -- again the -- I knew them -- two girls were not run over, but their legs -- no. One girl, her leg was caught under the wheel, and another girl -- I remember a very pretty girl -- she was run over and there was no help. There was no help. And we had to -- we had to leave her there. She --

Q. Was she alive?

A. She was still suffering. There was nothing that could be done for her and we had to move on, so I don't know. She was just left and the

guards maybe just, you know, shot her. And this other woman, girl, she had two other sisters and this was the one that wore -- she had laced -- laced boots all the way up to her knees, and she had a swollen broken leg, but that held her leg together and her two sisters supported her, hopping and walking. They were able to make her a brace. They didn't unlace her boot. They knew enough not to unlace it and helped her, and that poor girl struggled and struggled and marched, helping her. This was the one that was allowed to cross over the bridge to the -- at this place Grima, where we were over -- we had no guads and the Americans took her. They allowed very sick people and she survived. She's still alive. She lives in Israel with her sisters. I think one sister is in Australia. If she wouldn't have had anybody to help her, she would have been left there and would have been shot. But her sisters gave her family support.

This is an incident that I remember very well because it was toward the end already. And interestingly, this girl was engaged to a young man who was alive. He's in -- he lives in Vienna. They were married. I remember they were such a handsome couple before the war, and she just -- she just

died because she was injured by retreating trucks, tanks, whatever, you know.

Q. Is this when they were leaving you?

A. No, this -- we were resting on the roadside. We were still -- there were still guards. This was toward the end before liberation, and the -- 'cause the German army was retreating. I don't know in which direction they were going.

Q. How many people were in your group, would you estimate, when you left?

A. I have no idea, because you didn't look back. You didn't look forward. You just marched. I have no idea.

Q. Five hundred? A thousand?

A. I have no idea. No idea. I don't know.

Q. How many did you lose?

A. Like I said, our immediate group survived, cousins, friends survived. And the ones that we saw at the roadside, they must have been from other camps, from other parts of Auschwitz. They were not dressed well and they just couldn't survive the march, you know. They were all sorts -- lots of bodies, and I heard shots and shots because at least the guards put them out of their misery, you know, because that's -- they might have

been dead already probably, or who knows.

Well, I don't know of anything else.

Q. I'd like to hear about Ravensbruck in detail.

A. We were not there long enough. We were just sitting there. All I heard in Ravensbruck, there were a lot of Russian woman and they were very cruel. Some Ukranian women. We just stayed away from them, because if -- if a wagon with food was coming, the cattle, they were bringing it to the barracks, they just attacked it, and we heard that there was cannibalism there in that camp before, because they were prisoners there for years, and there were no crematoria in Ravensbruck, so they were already there, and so this was toward the end and they took us away, fortunately away from there.

There was another place I heard where a girl fell into the latrine and just drowned and nobody helped her. I mean, things like that.

Again I don't remember how long we were there. I have it written down somewhere, because when I applied for reparation, you know, for German reparation, then it was freshly in my mind the dates, and I consulted my cousins and we knew exactly the dates more or less, so I have it written

down on my papers. But I don't remember offhand how long. Except fortunately we were there not long. It was a terrible place.

Q. How was your health at this point?

A. At this point? Well, I think for a 64-year-old woman, I guess you know my age there, I think I'm okay. I mean, okay, I have little things. I had an ulcer when I was 20, which was cured, and I guess it was probably the result of -- because -- a semi-ulceration because I was on a diet under care for a whole year and that was healed. I still have some -- some stomach problems. I mean, I won't go into medical details. I get migraine headaches once in a while, which again a lot of people do. I have a lot of little things but nothing serious. It's something that you can live with. A lot of people have weak backs and disks that are not lined up properly, but they learn to live with it, but I was fortunate enough to marry a nice man. I'm married to him 44 years. I married young. In those days we all got married young. I guess your parents got married young. And also when we were alone we just wanted to have a family, belong to somebody, and I have no parents, though I have very nice uncles, but still I've got two nice children. Good

children. And I'm happy that we have a following of grandchildren.

And what else?

Q. After you left Ravensbruck, how long did you march?

A. No, no. Then they took us to Leipzig.

Q. How?

A. How? By train, I remember. Right. They took us -- they took us by train. And that was at the time I think the incident in Magdeburg where there was the bombing, I think, because geographically Magdeburg is, I think, on the way to Leipzig and in Leipzig we worked for a while in a munitions factory. But there were -- see, in Germany already once you were in -- somehow you felt -- once in Germany -- that's why a lot of people volunteered for transports whenever they asked for volunteers to work in factories, because they had no crematoria in Germany and they had no exterminations. The Germans, they did not want to do it on their soil, so clean factory, clean barracks and clean dining room where they cooked parsnips, and after that we were already marching for -- towards liberation, we were always -- the guards -- there were no guards and we saw white

flags and then we knew already it's over.

Q. Who was holding he white flags?

A. Well, some civilians you could see on -- se them holding some white flags, yeah. And then there was a new life and then we had to just pick up pieces and start a new life.

Q. Do you remember the moment of recognizing that you were free?

A. Well, the guards disappeared. And there were white flags but we didn't see any liberators for the longest time. I don't know why. And then we just were trying to walk and walk to find some liberators. And then like I said, then we came to this place, this town called Cremazo (ph.). Germany was devastated. Not the farms, but the cities. And we lived for a while in a bombed out house and there were other prisoners there, liberated and they went to the farmers for food, and we wee just waiting. We were told the Americans would come over, because we wanted to be liberated by the Americans. We knew at that time that was better than the Russians, but then the Russians came and they took us to a camp where they gathered all the prisoners and fed us and we were waiting for he next thing to happen, and they took us to another

camp, I remember, and then the Czech rescuers came, picked up all -- picked us up, brought us to Prague. And there already I found two uncles. There was an uncle -- Uncle Louie Same Uncle Louie. He's a very famous uncle, who -- okay. At that time in Russia, when the war was -- no. The war was still on. There was a Czech general by the name of Sropoda, and he formed the Czech legion. I don't know -- funny thing about this, he formed the Czech legion, and these mostly Jews were put into Czech uniform and came back fighting, helping fight the Germans, and there were two uncles that survived, younger uncles, and they were in uniform, and when they came back to Czechoslavakia, they were heroes and they were given good jobs and apartments, so we had somebody to be with, somebody to live with, because we did go back after the war. I guess everybody tried to pick up their pieces, to figure out what to do, where to go. We were in Budapest for about a week, and then we were again -- I don't know at that time whether it was Joint or whatever organizations. Money was coming, I think, from the United States already. From England. Jewish agencies. And we were -- we stayed in Budapest for about a week in a school, all young people, and then we started

hearing this one is alive, this one is in this city. This one is looking for this one. Then I heard that my brother is alive, that somebody saw him in Czechoslovakia.

Well, we started going back, traveling back to my -- to our region, which was Russia. The borders were open at that time. You could travel freely. But it was dangerous because there were a lot of Russian soldiers and they were very -- there were a lot of rapes going on, you know. Russian soldiers after the war.

And I went back to my hometown to see what's -- it was -- there was nothing there. It was -- nothing was available. Again I had another uncle that lived already there that took over a sawmill that another brother had owned. My uncle was there with his son, my cousin, so I stayed with them a night or two and we decided to go back and live in Czechoslavakia, because it was better to live there. Czechoslavakia was not devastated. There was no bombing. There was more availability. So we decided then to go back, and I met my brother to go back and to live with my uncle. One cousin lived with one uncle -- and by the way, Uncle Louie was married shortly before the war, and his wife

survived, my Aunt Magda. Her name is also Magda. And of course they found each other. They were young and they lived in Prague and I lived in another town called Temlitshonov (ph.), and it's a resort town, with my brother, myself, with this other uncle who had a job there and had an apartment, because there were a lot of Germans that ran away from Czechoslovakia. They were afraid of of the Russians. They went back to Germany, so those participate apartments were available, and we lived there for a while. I started going back to school and again everybody had -- worked to do something and they had the elections in Czechoslovakia and the Communist Party won.

This was in -- let's see now -- '46. Yeah, early 4' -- '46. Again everything happened Passover. We were liberated in '45. And we knew enough that things would not be very good under the Communists, so at that time they were -- people were going over the border to the American zone to DP camps, and again it was organized by some Jewish -- Jewish agencies. So everybody was young. Only the young people survived. So the -- we organized valises for our possessions, and we went by train to the border, entering in the night. We were

smuggled across the border to Germany, but it had to be you know, we had to -- there were a lot of people but it had to be done secretly because the Czech border guards were paid off. The German border guards were paid off. Everything was done by the Jewish agency. Actually not even the Jewish agencies. There were a lot of young people who worked for I want to call it Hagganah from Israel, because they wanted young people to come to Germany and then come to Israel. They needed people for Israel, but the transport was caught by the -- who was it? By the American MP, and they sent the whole transport back, but I got sick and I was in no position to go back, so they allowd some sick people, older people to remain, and then the organizers grabbed everybody fast and put them on a truck and took them to the DP camps, and then of course my brother was with me, also brother Harry, so being that I was sick, they allowed him to take care of me. And then the following -- as soon as the coast was clear, the same transport came across the border again, but it was a terrible, terrible trip, the whole night to walk quietly across the border. It was a whole night March and you walked with your valise and the handle breaks on the

valise. But anyway, that was -- that was the end. And then we were in the --

Q. What was your sickness?

A. I became hysterical. I was so exhaust -- I was so exhausted that I -- it was the first and last time in my life, from exhaustion, walking the whole night, carrying that valise, my only possessions, and I remember the handle broke and when I came back, I said, "I don't care what they do to me, but I cannot -- I'm not going back." And I became hysterical and crying, so they -- that saved me a trip. I was in no position to go back. And -- well, we were in DP camps and came to this country.

Q. How long were you in the camps?

A. I think for about a year we were in Germany, until we got called. At that time there was a Czech quota.

Q. Did you know anybody over here?

A. Here? I had relative. Uncle Louie was here already. And I had -- I had two uncles. Well, we had relatives here because my mother had three brothers here that emigrated before the first world war, and my father -- two of my -- my father also gad three brothers, but one I never knew, because he died. Two brothers. So I had about five uncles

here, but again whoever came to this country, everyone stayed with Uncle Louie, because he came here before us from Czechoslavakia, and he had room for everybody.

Q. Where did he live?

A. He lived in Brooklyn, and we all lived with him until I got married, my brother got married, my cousin got married, and that's why he's so dear to us.

I met my husband in Germany, and we came out on the same boat in 1948. And here we are.

Q. Was he in the DP camp?

A. No. That's why he says he has no story. My husband was -- grew up in Russia, and he was in Russia during the war. When the borders were open after the water, he just left, because his brother as stationed in Poland. And he found out from the Polish Jews that there's another world than Russia, because remember again, they were closed in and they just picked themselves up and they came to Germany, fortunately --

Q. Where was -- I'm sorry.

A. Well, they were fortunate. This is how they got out of Russia.

I'm sorry. You wanted to ask me

something.

Q. Were they -- We he a Russian soldier? Did he fight with the Russians?

A. Yeah, he was Russian soldier, but again he didn't fight much. He was watching the -- the oil fields in Bakoo (ph.). He was stationd there. Somebody had to watch the oil fields. So he was there. But his family perished because he comes from Minsk, and the Germans occupied Minsk, so his family perished. The only one that's alive is his sister, because his sister was married at the time and her husband was sent away to Siberia to manage a factory, so his sister was not at Minsk any time, so she survived. The rest -- all the Jews in Minsk got killed. So he is in a way a survivor but -- but a different -- by different means.

Q. Does he know specifically what happened to his family?

A. All they know is that they were in a ghetto and they were just shot. They were not taken -- of course they could not have been taken to Auschwitz. They were just -- they were all -- just like stories of Baba Yar and those places. They were shot in trenches. So it's him and his brother and sister. And his sister came out about 19 years

ago, again with that Russian -- the recent Russian immigrants came out 19, 20 years ago.

Q. And that's the first time he'd seen her since he had left?

A. Sure.

Q. So how long had that been?

A. Well, quite a few years. Quite a few years. There was no contact with his cousin, because they were afraid to write. And then I took a trip to Russia, volunteered to go, because he was afraid he wouldn't go back, so I said there has to be some contact, so when people started traveling to Russia, just before they came here, I took my daughter, who was about 13 years old, to see his sister and -- see her brother's children. We didn't at that time -- there was no talk of immigration, so one of our sons, who was traveling on a -- he was on a student flight, and we arranged we met him and I went to Lenningrad, and I was there for about a week, and it was just a very emotional visit. And then a year later, they came, the whole family. They started letting people out.

Well, that's a different story.

Q. Can you tell us about your children.

A. Okay. Well, we got married in '48. 19

-- am I too loud? Loud enough. Okay. I got married in '48. Jeffrey was born in 1949. Ronnie was born in '51 and finally a girl was born in -- let's see -- maybe '50 -- '51 -- Ronnie was born in '51. She was born in 1958, right. And what else would you like to know about them?

Q. Have you told them about your --

A. Well, when they were young, I didn't want to burden them with these atrocities, and even later on they were reading a lot and never did they -- did I really tell them about things the way I'm talking now. I just -- I didn't, just didn't want to burden them. I just didn't want to -- I just told them about the happy times, my childhood, all the happy things, but the one who really knows the most is Rochelle, because she got involved. And they know enough. I feel they know these incidents, the details. I just felt -- let's put it this way. I know from other friends, from other people I just couldn't talk about it much, especially to my children. I just couldn't talk about it. But it seems like now that you do all these oral -- today you call them oral histories or whatever we feel now -- now somehow we feel it really -- we to talk about it, even though it's very painful and hard, but it

has to be done.

About a year ago I was approached to do it, and I said I'm not ready for it yet, but I felt now -- I know we go to these functions. We're big supporters of the Holocaust Museum, and we go to some of the functions and some of the memorails I can't even go. I don't even go. But the last one we went to was -- it was tremendous. It was done in the Javitz Center. The Warsaw Ghetto, the people from the Warsaw Ghetto are very active, and it was just beautifully done, and we were given very good seats and it was -- so I just feel once a year you just -- you just have to cry. I mean, I owe that much, to -- to let go, to break down once a year at least. And I did it. But again the more I read about it, the more things should be recorded, so here I am, talking about it. As much as I remember. As much as I can.

Q. When do you think of your family?

A. Oh, many times. Many times. Mostly in my dreams. Mostly in my dreams. And -- many times at these memorials, where I feel, gee, my sisters, my parents never saw any of their grandchildren, never saw us really grow up to a -- and never had the pleasure of having grandchildren. At this point

that generation is gone already. Nobody is alive anymore because at this point -- my mother was born in 1903, my father was born in 19 -- no, in 1893. He was ten years older. And they died very young, considering my mother was 42, my father was about 52. But many times I think back and it's not only my sisters, but my little cousins, and there's no -- no following in that family. My little -- so many -- you know, so many young cousins that never lived. So many other people, so many other children. But here I -- I knew my little cousins and they never had a life. So of course then it -- you're angry once in a while. I have anger. I know the first time we went to -- it was the first reunion in Washington. I do not remember how many years ago. And people came from all over, survivors, and it was very well-done, and at that time it was more like a reunion. There were -- there were different shows and there was -- in the -- a lot of dignitaries, performances and meeting people from California, from Australia. People came from Israel, people that we knew, but there was another reunion in Philadelphia, and that was very, very sad, and I -- I just felt -- I broke down. I just felt as -- more anger. A lot of anger, that all

these people didn't have a chance to live. And also we felt, gee, only nine, ten months, everybody would have alive if the area would have been liberated a little earlier. So that's our tragedy in life. But we always felt we just have to go on and carry on and get married and have children so there should be at least -- I don't know what you call it -- followup or continuation. And -- so I'm grateful I have a good husband, a good marriage, good children and they -- considering they are very normal, I think so, because I never burden them, because there were a lot of second generation children that have problems because your parents couldn't open up. I've heard of parents crying, their nightmares, and one thing we feel in our family that we were always very giving and concerned and maybe overprotective of our children, though our children had their freedom, free to move to California, free to choose colleges, free to travel, but they always felt that no matter where they were, they always have a home and that we're very supportive and whenever -- the youngest of course, Rochelle, because she's the only girl and the youngest and spoiled, so she understood that we lost so much and our children are so dear to us. I mean, children are dear to every parent, but

understanding that by losing so much that we care about our children in a different way maybe.

Anything else about the children you'd like to know?

Q. How do you think they'll respond to this tape?

A. This tape? Well, maybe there are, like I said, a few, little -- not a few. I wouldn't say little. Certain details that I maybe never told them. But, you know, the family, the background they know, and they -- even the boys would love to go back to the place where I was born, because we're a close family, so they probably know most of it. So I don't know how much more they'll find out.

Q. Do you feel that another Holocaust is possible?

A. I hope not. I hope not. I -- oh, I really couldn't answer you that question. I think that Jews are more organized and more aware and I don't think so, not in this day and age. I mean, there are atrocities all over the world going on, but people are more aware. Jews are more organized with organizations. I hope not and I don't think so.

Q. Have you been to Israel?

A. Yes. I think twice, three times.

Q. Did you visit Yad Vashem?

A. No. And I don't know if I would like to. And certain things I can't do. I stopped watching TV on the subject. I mean, I saw enough dead bodies and I saw enough corpses, and to me -- I mean, I've seen it. I read enough books. These aren't just stories. There was -- there are a few good books. There's one called -- oh, God. I can't remember -- Of Blood and Tears, which was beautifully written. In fact we met -- we met him at one of the functions in Washington.

Q. What's the name of the author?

A. Borotch, Bookgotch (ph.), something. Of Blood and Tears. Actually this boy, this young boy, is hiding out in Poland from place to place. It will come to me. I'm trying to remember. It will come to me. Register -- it will come to me later. And he became a very -- I don't know if you know anything about it. He became an international lawyer. He worked for Unesco, wrote a lot of books, he got into the Kennedy's -- what's his name anyway? He went -- he lived in Australia with an uncle and he got a scholarship here to Harvard, and this was a young boy. He was

running around in Pland, going from place to place and he -- brilliant mind. And it's a very good book. And a lot of people are writing books about their life stories.

I'll tell you something. At the time I was in Israel I do not think Yad Vashem was even completed. The last time I was there was -- let me see -- at least nine years ago. We went to a friend. He had a grandson's bar mitvah, and the boy just graduated college, so he's about 22, 23. Yeah, about nine, ten years ago. I don't even know if it was completed at the time. Okay.

Q. Tell us about your trip you took this summer.

(Significant interruption in transcription.)

Q. Like I said, the reason I decided to go is because I didn't want to go alone, and this cousin of mine -- who's, by the way -- his mother's grave is in this cemetery, because his mother died when he was an infant and his father remarried, and he said he wanted to go because his father -- mainly because of the cemetery, and also his father was -- was not -- was a rich man. He owned lumber mills. And he wanted to see now if the Ukranians want to do

business with him. Maybe he can repurchase. Anyway he -- anyway, he's going, I'll go. And my husband and Rochelle came with us on this trip, and we drove from Budapest several hours. We picked up the car. My cousin drove, because he's used to -- he lived in New York for many years, and up to last year he lived in Spain, and driving in Europe you have to know how.

Anyway, we could do it, but he drove about four, five hours, crossed the border, entered into Hungarian, Ukranian border. I wouldn't tell you any detail about crossing the border. I don't think it's of any interest. Anyway they were very courteous when they saw the American passport, because they want visitors, and we stayed in hotel in a town called Ushorot, which is the capital. Terrible conditions in the hotel. The mosquitos were eating us up the whole time. My cousin and husband shared a room and it was myself and Rochelle, and it was just noisy in those bedrooms, and it was lucky to get some towels from the other -- from Hungary. And we stayed overnight at Ushorot, and the next day we drove to a town called Mokochevl, where we stayed with these friends of my uncles, which I mentioned before, where it was a

mixed marriage and they still live there, and we put down -- our little things down, our little valises down, and they had a tour of the villages, which was about another 30 kilometers, and the cities looked -- they were in terrible condition, very dilapidated, people are very depressed. There's nothing in the stores. Terrible conditions. And we came to the town that I -- we had to pass the town that I grew up, Svalava, and I told my cousin -- I says -- we were heading to the village, to the cemetery, but we bypassed -- we had to go through the town. I says, Look, we are here in this town already. Let's turn off and let's drive to our street and let me see if there's somebody there, if it's worthwhile coming back, because it was in our plan to do it the following day, and we turned off and I come to a -- I see the streets there, the houses. In fact I have pictures of them. And I stop. The school is here. I mean the houses are maintained, because the small towns are fine. The big cities are terrible. And I stop and I'm looking, gee, this is a -- it is the street of our neighbor, the one that helped us with the housework and milked the cow, and I'm standing here and looking and in the meantime I go into another house

that are members of the family Richter (ph.), and I go in and I ask the woman, Is this the Richter house? Because I recognized the house. She says, No, we bought the house from them. And the woman comes out with a torn thing and little girl and she says, Do you have something? Can I buy something from you, a dress or something. And I said, I'm sorry. I didn't bring anything.

And then there's a little girl, her granddaughter, and Rochelle gives her some candy and gum, and you should see how the child's face lit up, because they don't -- they just don't have anything. So I says, How about the daughter? And she says, No, she passed away six years ago.

Well, next door lived the woman Maria that was the woman that helped us, and she is not alive, but her daughter lives there, and I go into that house, and as I'm standing now to go into the house, a man pulls over with a bicycle and he talk to me in Hungarian, because I speak -- he says, Can I help you? I said my name is Solasoff (ph.). We used to live in that house. And he grabbed me and hugs and kisses me, because -- they called me Monnie (ph.), and he said, Monnie, and he kisses me and hugs me and he disappeared.

This was my older -- my brother Harry's friend. He used to come to our house, because we were good friends with the people there. And he left. So I go into this house across the street and this woman comes out and again I told her. She hugs me and kisses me. She was two years younger than me but she remembered the family, so I started asking -- because her brother went to school with me. I says, Where is your brother? And she says, No, my brother passed away a few years ago. Then I mentioned a few names from the neighbor. Hilda. Her name was Hilda. She is -- she says, Yes, she doesn't live far from here. And she married a doctor. Her husband died. I says, Look, I'm coming back tomorrow morning. Why don't you go over to Hilda and tell her that I am here and I would like to see her and ask her -- maybe she has some pictures from the past.

Well, anyway, we came back the next morning. My husband and my cousin left to another village, because they had to go again to see another cemetery where my aunts and parents were buried. They promised they'll go. And they were supposed to meet a man there. And myself and Rochelle, they dropped us on the corner. We started walking on the

street where I walked as child and this girl -- this woman, this neighbor, Ilona (ph.) took me to Hilda's house, and that poor Hilda cried when she saw me and started pulling out pictures and telling me about her life and about this one and this one.

And then by the time I turned around, my husband and my cousin were back. I expected them to spend more time, because I wanted to walk into the school. I wanted to walk to some of the streets. And he decided -- he actually decided to go back that afternoon. And it was quite -- you know, quite a trip back over the border. We never knew what to expect, because sometimes the line up at the border is Russian trucks and people, so we were heading back. So I might go back one day yet because I -- I feel I still wanted to walk through and go through and -- so then we went to my grandmother, anyway to the village where my grandmother lived, another village, and we found there a peasant woman who -- asked her -- we found the old house, which is abandoned there standing -- my grandmother's house, and I asked -- I says, you know, if she lived there? And she says, yeah. I know she was a little girl there. Maybe I even played with her during the summer there. And there are other things, but I

wouldn't go into any detail. And of course we visited the cemetery. We took along some prayer books because my husband wouldn't know the Kaddish by heart. And we lit candles and the gravestones. And the local people were very friendly because real so rarely does somebody come there. And that was that.

It's interesting. When I was in Budapest we found a paper, an English paper, and we found an article that was written by Elie Weisel, and I think that was geared toured tourists that had come back, and he said everybody has to go back and see the emptiness and they close the book. It's like -- I guess I had a desire to go back but somehow I feel I didn't accomplish quite -- I would like to go back because there are other members of the family. I want to go back so we might organize a kind of group and go back. It's very beautiful country, the Campadian Mountains, and it's a very nice region. It's very clean because they cannot afford to throw bottles and papers. And the other visit was good. It was a very emotional, very interesting visit, but somehow -- I don't know. When I came, everybody asked me didn't I want to go into the house? I said I didn't have time to think whether I wanted to get

into the house. First of all, the house was extensively remodeled, and somebody lives in that house. Somebody bought the house. Apparently the government sold off all the Jewish houses. I still don't know whether I want to go in or not. Maybe not. Maybe just leave it at this time the way I remembered it.

Q. Did any Jews return to live there?

A. Yes, but since then, there's nobody there anymore. There was one young man there, and he's leaving also. Everybody emmigrated either to Israel or to the United States. There were not that many left. And also from the villages, they all moved, who came back to the towns, they left. So Hitler accomplished something, Juden frie. I don't know if you know what it means. Free of Jews. In the whole region, there are some people left. We met some people in this first city, Ushorot, and apparently there were intermarriages. I mean not apparently. There were intermarriages, so they're tied down with children with the in-laws. They don't want to leave because of families. And this family that we stayed with, where I mentioned that she -- they're both teachers. She is Jewish and he's not. Now they have three children and each --

one daughter married a Jewish boy and they came to the United States about 15 years ago and they live in Brooklyn. Now the rest of the family is coming out, because there's a brother and a sister. The brother married a Gentile woman. The sister married a Gentile man. But they're all coming out to the United States. I just heard they all got papers and they're all coming out to the United States.

Q. I'm going back a while. I was curious, because you mentioned that your family kept kosher when you were younger, what it wsa like. Did your sisters, brothers, all of you go to schul and did everybody --

A. Well, okay. I know that my parents went every Saturday to temple. My father used to go -- he was home. He used to go, I think, twice a day. That was life. They went in the morning, or if he didn't go then, he had to read the prayers at home. And then he went at night -- the -- a social gathering, discussing politics, and I know my brothers also had to -- well, I only remember Harry, because the other was still young. He had to in the morning to put what's call tefillen and like I said, we were considered Orthodox because that was the way of life we did.

Q. Did your mother go to schul or was it just the men?

A. No. Just on Saturdays she used to go to schul.

Q. Was there any discussion in your home between 1938 and 1943, when, you know -- when it was tense, when the war began? Do you remember your parents talking about anything, saying that they felt threatened or --

A. No, I don't remember. The only thing I think I was only concerned because all the men were taken into the forced -- in the labor. Actually it was like an army, but they were not in uniform and they weren't fighting. They were -- I do not know what you call it here. They were cleaning up. They were doing the physical labor behind the front, the fighters, and they were cleaning up, doing the menial work. So that was the concern, because they were actually on the Russian front. It was very dangerous and a lot of men were taken away where they had families. I don't remember them getting any pay. They had to make a living. They had no jobs. So I think that was at that time the main concern. And also they took away business permits from Jews. Only a few were left, very few. Only

the ones that had -- were in the first world war, were heroes. Or I remember I had an uncle who had a supermarket. It was a big grocery store. But there was a black market. They would sell things secretly and that's when it started. They left a few stores here and there, and then people from Hungary came and took over the stores, party members.

Q. What about your father? Your father had a lumber business?

A. It was actually not a lumber yard. In that region there were -- there was a lot of lumber so they were cutting down lumber, so they -- from what I understood, they leased or bought a part of the forest and then they had men that were cutting down the lumber. They were bringing down the lumber to the factories. And that was the business.

Q. Did you -- I'm sorry.

A. Yeah, that was the business he was in.

Q. So during the time of the war he was still supporting the family?

A. Oh, yeah, he was supporting the family to the last minute, because I had one uncle who was a a very rich man, and they were doing business in Hungary with Budapest, and toward the end I think my

father was working for my uncle, overseeing -- they were like overseeing them cutting down lumber, and he was away the whole week, and he used to come home for Friday and stay home Saturday, Sunday. And at times I remember when he used to bring meats and cheese, because he was in the villages. I remember him bringing things when things were tough.

Q. Going back to the brick factory, were you told anything, any information about the future? Was there any circulation?

A. No, no. I didn't know anything.

Q. And then in Auschwitz, was there any -- did you do any personal prayer or did the group that you were with, your cousins -- was there any --

A. No.

Q. What about -- I'm just curious about Jewish holidays or your birthday.

A. We didn't know. Maybe some older women knew, but we as teenagers, we didn't -- it wasn't important as long as we had a little bit of food every day. Maybe some older women were fasting. Maybe they knew there was Yom Kippur or -- actually we were there during the High Holidays, because we were there from April 'til January, so -- but no. You know, there was a point in time where you just

stopped believing. I personally -- I mean I don't know if it's the right thing for me to say but I personally gave up. Either people became -- you know, in this case either people became more pious and religious, just God saved me, God meant me to go on, and my thinking was, where was God? And the ones that suffered the most -- like before they took us away -- was the guys that had beards, pulling them by the beards and hitting them. They -- just, you know, the very religious people were suffering more. And I had just loss faith and didn't -- it didn't matter. I mean tradition is very important to me because remembering all the holidays, the beautiful things, the sukkahs. We always had a sukkah, and decorating it, and traditional foods, and it's very, very important to me, tradition, but as far as religion, it's another thing and it had to do with the Holocaust. When you ask a rabbi, a religious man, for an explanation they say, you know, you don't question God, so that's -- that's my feeling.

Q. Did you ever think -- like when the woman was shot next to you, did it ever occur to you -- did you ever think maybe there is a God. Like the bullet --

A. I didn't have time to think. I didn't have time to think. I just ducked flat until everything was over and just went back to my group. You know, you become bitter and you just don't think about it.

Q. You started mentioning the process when you went to get your tatoo, but you didn't finish. Was there a line?

A. Yes.

Q. Was it all women?

A. We were separated at that point. We didn't see any men. Woman were separate.

Q. So what was the process like?

A. Lined up alphabeticaly, and just got a number and then -- other inmates were doing it, and if you know some people -- tatoos -- you know it's there. I mean, it's there.

Q. What did your barracks look like the actual place were you slept?

A. Different places, different barracks. I think they were -- the first one I think they were three layers, and I remember some places we had blankets, some places we didn't. So many different places. There were so many different barracks.

Q. I had one question that was brought to

mind, and that is what role does religion play in your life right now?

A. Right now. Okay. I belong to a temple, a conservative temple, support a temple. Go at High Holidays. I go and I sit with my husband. I don't do much praying. Let's put it this way. The boys were bar mitvahed, went to religous school. Rochelle went to religious school. Jeffrey now -- the one that moved to Santa Fe is very active in his temple. He married a non-Jewish girl, but they belong to temple. Last year we had a bar mitzvah. A grandson was bar mitzvahed from temple, and he is -- I said he's active. Let me see. Because we support a temple, even though we just go over the High Holidays. We used to be active more socially, but somehow we are there -- now we live in the area 34 years, and a lot of people passed away and a lot of people moved away to -- and people -- so we go occasionally to some social functions, but the main thing is that we pay our dues and it's very important to them. And we have to, because neighborhoods are changing and -- and that's about it. I don't, you know, keep a kosher home. We don't have any pork, but it's not strictly kosher. Also it has to with because my husband didn't insist

on it, because when he grew up, his mother was kosher, but he was away from home and then when I -- after the war, I lived with my uncle and at that time in Czechoslavakia there wasn't even any kosher meat, and he was not kosher, so somehow -- and when I came here and lived with Uncle Louie, it wasn't kosher either, and I wasn't exposed to it after the war, so somehow it was not important because -- for me to be kosher, so...

Q. This is kind of a philosophical question.

A. Excuse me. Is this an interruption?

Q. No. This is a question real quick. If you could leave a message based on your life, knowing your life now the way you do, if you could leave a message for people in the year 3000 who might see the tape or read the transcript, what kind of message would you like to leave them?

A. Well, I'd have to think about it a little bit. A message concerning what? What?

Q. What you hope for the future maybe. What can be learned from the past.

A. Well, what can be learned from the past is another Holocaust should not occur and there are survivors and that Hitler didn't do his job

completely, that we are here and we have children and we'll carry on and we are here and he's not here. And that -- I don't know. This is just what comes to me right this minute.

Q. That's nice. Thank you.

A. And again going back to my region where I see how people live in such misery and they were so happy to see us, but I say, see, here I am -- I survived. At least I got away to a better country, to a good country, and I'm grateful to be here and being able to raise a family and be here.

Q. Okay.

A. Is this off?

Q. We're off now.

---oOo---