

Interview with LENCI FARKAS

Holocaust Oral History Project

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MS. BENDAYAN: Q I'M SANDRA BENDAYAN. I'M HERE
AT THE HOLOCAUST LIBRARY.

TODAY IS NOVEMBER THE 6th, 1990, AND I'M
INTERVIEWING LENCI FARKAS FOR THE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT.

LENCI, WOULD YOU PLEASE INTRODUCE YOURSELF AND
TELL WHERE AND WHEN YOU WERE BORN AND YOUR NAME IF IT
WASN'T THE SAME AS LENCI FARKAS.

A All right. Okay. My name is Lenci Farkas,
and that's my married name. I was born Zisovits.
Zisovits was my maiden name.

I was born in Czechoslovakia, which became Hungary
in 1941, '42, when Hitler gave back to the Hungarians the
part that was divided after the first world war.

Q WHEN WERE YOU BORN?

A I was born in 1922.

Q AND --

A In May.

Q IN WHAT TOWN?

A It was called Kralovo Nad Tisou. In

Hungarian Kira'ly Ma'za. And at that time it belonged to Czechoslovakia.

Q AND WHAT WAS THE MAKEUP OF YOUR FAMILY?

A You mean if we were a large family? Is that what you're asking?

Q YES. DID YOU HAVE BROTHERS AND SISTERS?

A Yes. I had, we were eight girls and one boy.

Q UH-HUH.

A It was not one marriage. Of course, my mother passed away when I was born in childbirth. My father remarried. But I was the sixth child, sixth daughter.

And my father remarried and had -- and she, my stepmother, had a daughter from her previous marriage. She was married before. She also was a Viret (phonetic). Then they had two more together, so we had nine years in our children.

Q SO YOUR STEPMOTHER WAS THE ONLY MOTHER --

A The stepmother was the only mother I knew, yes.

Q DID YOU HAVE GRANDPARENTS AND OTHER RELATIVES?

A My grandmother passed away. I was a little girl. I was somehow a late child, because when I was

born my older sister was already married. So the grandparents, no, I didn't know.

From my mother's side, my real mother, her family came to the United States just about the time I was born. But I don't know very much about them. And they were very in contact with them.

Q WAS THIS A SMALL VILLAGE OR LARGE TOWN?

A Yes. It was 5,000 inhabitants. It was a village. I call it a village, yes.

Q A FARMING COUNTRY?

A No. It was a railroad center where they came in from Romania, from Czechoslovakia, the trains, they changed engine. So it was more or less built on railroad.

Q What WAS YOUR FATHER'S WORK?

A My father was a builder, and he had a lumberyard. He also had a small bank. So it all was building, building more or less.

Q SO IT SOUNDED LIKE YOU WERE COMFORTABLE.

A Yes. We were comfortable.

Q AND WAS YOUR FAMILY A RELIGIOUS FAMILY?

A Like everybody else in Europe at that time, yes, we were. We were not Chasidim, but my father had a small beard.

As a matter of fact, I have a picture of him for

you here. And my mother wore a wig, naturally. I mean, that was the standard thing.

This is my father right here.

(Exhibiting photograph.)

Q OKAY. HE WAS A HANDSOME PERSON.

A And this is a picture of my stepmother. You can see more that she wore a wig. You could tell, really.

(Exhibiting photograph.)

Q YEAH.

A Not very much, but you could tell. Well, you know, it wasn't kind of a like they call a shtetl (phonetic) or whatever they call it. You know, it was made out of artificial hair. This is more real hair and whatnot. So yeah. We were religious, of course. We were orthodox Jews.

Q UH-HUH. WERE THERE A LOT OF JEWS IN THIS TOWN?

A A hundred twenty families. We had some Chasidim too. There was just across from our temple we had a Chasidic temple. And there was the Straymo (phonetic) was the, you know, the hat with the fur around and the long beard and whatnot.

Q AS A CHILD GROWING UP DID YOU HAVE ANY SENSE OF ANTISEMATISM IN THE TOWN?

A Well, until we were Czechoslovakia, which from 1918 'til 1941, I think, I'm not quite sure, '41 or '42 when the Hungarians came in, no, I did not really experience antisemitism.

But when Hitler came in power and the things started in Germany and Poland, then you started feeling it. Yes, the talk was, you know, you're a Jew.

But it wasn't uncomfortable at all. I mean, you still felt this is where you belong. I mean, my father was born there, his father was born there. We really come from that area.

So no. But something reminds me of a schoolmate that went to school with me. He never, never experienced any antisemitism or any way that he would say anything.

But when this started, then he, he said you're Jewish, you know. You're a shichkock (phonetic) in Czech language. And he actually came from a German family.

Q UH-HUH.

A So that was the only experience until then, of course, when it was given back to the Hungarians, then we experienced more of the antisemitism, more and more.

Q AS YOU SAY, THAT WAS LATER IN THE EARLY '40'S?

A That was already, yes. Not until then we did not believe that anything can happen, that it will

happen to us. We were very comfortable.

Q SO YOUR FAMILY WAS TALKING ABOUT THESE --

A Well, they talked about it because, you know, rumors came down that this and this is happening in Poland. Poland wasn't that far from us. Then slowly there were refugees coming from Poland going through Hungary, going to wherever they went, Palestine at that time or even United States. They were passing by, and they were telling stories. But, you know, you don't believe that it can happen to you.

Q UH-HUH. DO YOU REMEMBER ANY OF THE STORIES?

A Yes. There was stories. She was a distant relative. She came from Poland. And her husband was a lawyer in -- I can't think of the name right now, the city, but I might remember.

And he was the first one to of course be taken away from -- I mean, the Germans took him away, and he never came back.

But she was lucky enough, she was Hungarian, spoke Hungarian, and somehow she made friends with Hungarian officers, and they brought her over through the border from Poland to Hungary.

And she came to our town. Of course, she stayed with us. You are not supposed to do it, but of course she stayed with us. And she went to hungry.

And she was telling us, she was saying that we should really do something while we are able to do something and get out of here. But we didn't listen. My parents didn't listen. And --.

Q YOU SAY YOU WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO TAKE HER IN. WAS THERE ALREADY --

A Well, there was like, you know, refugees who were coming. And they said, you know, not to -- they themselves, they didn't have any papers. And they themselves didn't want to stay. They wanted to get as far away as possible. Although with her it wasn't so bad, because she spoke a perfect Hungarian language.

So if somebody talks to her, never would suspect that she wasn't from Hungary like so many of the other Polish people that came and didn't know one word. And it was dangerous. Those were really dangerous for people.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT WHEN THAT WAS?

A Well, this all happened in, between 1940 and 1941 and '42.

Q SO DID YOU HAVE ANY SENSE IN THE '30'S THAT THINGS --

A In the '30's I have to say no. My mother, my stepmother was in Budapest in the hospital. She had, she was sick. Well, I don't know. I was a young kid. I don't know very much what was her problem.

But she came back. And this was in 1937 or '38. She came back from Budapest, and she was saying that she read papers there, foreign papers.

Don't forget, where I come from is a village. You didn't get every paper and everything that was happening in the world.

And she came back and she says, she was reading these papers, papers from Germany. She said it's terrible what is going to happen. And this is serious.

This was in the '30's. But I was 15, 16 years old. You know, it's --

Q UH-HUH.

A I didn't -- I mean, it was worrisome and it was, it was frightening to hear it and to see that my mother was so scared and talking about it. But never, no, I didn't think that it would happen to us. Okay. I have to admit.

Q HOW ABOUT YOUR FATHER OR YOUR OLDER SISTERS?

A My older sisters, this was in 1939 or '38, one of my brother-in-laws came home and said to my father did he want to go to the United States because he has a family in the United States and he thinks that he should leave with his wife and his child.

I think that time he only had one, they only had one. And my father said aren't you ashamed to go to

America? Who goes to America who cannot make a living here. Don't you have an America here?

I never forget that. And this was when we were still Czechs and we really had a good life. And this is what my father said.

And my brother-in-law, okay, if that's what you say, it's okay with me. And he stayed. And of course his family perished and he came back. He lived in the United States after the war.

I just have here a picture of one of his little girls that perished with my sister. This one was a daughter. She went with her.

(Exhibiting photograph.)

And here is the mother of this little girl that's my sister.

Here. That's my sister and that's her daughter.

(Exhibiting photograph.)

Q SHE'S BEAUTIFUL.

A And this is the one that her husband wanted to come to the United States and he said not to.

I mean, I'm not blaming my father for it. It's just something that, you know, afterwards you start remembering that how, how we did not really want to believe that it can happen. I mean, my father was into everything.

I mean, you know, not only with Jewish people but with Gentile people. He built their houses and they came to him. And he was, later I got to know this more so, he was very Hungarian.

See, this, like I said, began in Czechoslovakia. And he was very Hungarian. So much so that when the Hungarians came in he all of a sudden, I don't know where he was hiding it, he brought out the Hungarian flag.

And he says well, why don't you just, he told me, why don't you just iron this flag and let's put it out, I don't know if, you know, Europe it's customary if somebody's happening you put your flag in the window and on the windowsill and whatnot. And I was so outraged because I never really felt so Hungarian as my father did.

And I took the flag and I, you know, wrinkled it like this in my (demonstrating) arm and I threw it down. I said I don't iron no Hungarian flag.

So, you know, disrespect to my father. How could you be like that. In my time, you know. He looked at me and he didn't say one word. He didn't say one word. He picked up the flag and he ironed it himself. And so that's how much he, Hungarian he was.

So he with the people. So he was, you know, Sunday people came home from church, they would stop by

(my father and discuss whatever they wanted to build and what they going to do.

And I even remember that one of the Hungarian women had her prayer book, and it accidentally, a little Hungarian, it's called a Hungarian cocarolo (phonetic), it's the three colors of the Hungarian flag, fell out of her prayer book on the floor.

(And they all looked at me, you know. My father and her. They all looked at me. I certainly didn't like it, but my father says don't you dare tell anybody what you saw. Don't you dare. Of course, I didn't dare. Why should I?

5 So, and then this same people, as a matter of fact, this same woman, when I came back in 1945, we were liberated in May, and I came in July to my home village, this -- I went into this woman's house because she didn't live very far from us, and she started telling me how wonderful my father was and all that.

But she did not go into her closet to give me a piece of clothes, and she did not say sit with us and have dinner with us. So these people must have had a hatred for us Jews, although they didn't show.

(Q UH-HUH.

A Because those same people that were standing by when we were taken to the ghetto and away from there,

they didn't do anything. They were just standing there and just looking.

Q YES.

A And so that's why I say that there must have been a hatred towards us, because when we came home, and this woman being so -- didn't she know that I don't have anything? Well, she knew. I mean, she knew. But she wouldn't say okay, stay with us, eat with us. It's okay, the American joint was having a kitchen there.

So we had what to eat and they were giving us some clothes too and all that.

But wouldn't that have been nice if she would have said hey, come on, let me do something for you. Thank God I didn't, we didn't need it, and we laughed and they stayed.

Q SO YOU THINK THAT THERE WAS A KIND OF QUIET ANTISEMATISM?

A I think it must have been. When I think about it now it must have been.

Because they were afraid when we came back that we were going to take away from them what they took away from us.

I saw my own clothes walking down the street, and I walked to the person, I said listen, that's my dress. She looked at me, she said this is not your dress. I had

it made.

Well, don't tell me; I recognize my clothes. You know, in a village like that you had your clothes made. You didn't go in the department store where everybody buys the same clothes, you know. So that's how it went.

Q DID YOU KNOW THAT PERSON WITH YOUR DRESS ON?

A No. No.

Q DID YOU HAVE NONJEWISH FRIENDS GROWING UP?

A When I went to school, yes, I had some nonJewish friends. But I can't say that they were that friendly when I came back. I mean, none of them offered anything. They just --

Q BUT YOU WERE FRIENDLY AS YOU WERE GROWING UP?

A We were friendly as we were growing up, yes. We went to school together.

Q YOU WENT TO PUBLIC SCHOOL?

A Public school, yes.

Q WHEN DID YOU AND YOUR FAMILY SENSE THAT THINGS WERE GETTING REALLY BAD, REALLY THREATENING?

A Well, when we felt that when, that was in, oh, 19, starting 1942, '43. We were deported in only 1944. So we were one of the last ones. And to the last minute we didn't believe it's going to happen. But then we, we couldn't keep our business.

My father couldn't have his business. He had to sell out, and only a Gentile could own business. Jews weren't supposed to. We weren't supposed to have Gentile servants. They weren't supposed to work for the Jews. So that's when you felt that it's getting serious. But that will happen.

What happened, I don't think, I don't think we really thought it well, or was it only me. I don't know. But I just don't think so.

When we were already in our temple taken away to the ghetto -- well, before we went to the ghetto, because we went to the ghetto in a big, in a bigger city --

Q WHEN DID YOU GO TO THE GHETTO?

A That was in 1944 in May. April. No. Exactly April. May was when we were already deported. In April right after Passover.

They waited 'til we have our Passover, our eight days, and the day right after early in the morning they came knocking on the door.

And they said pack as little as you can and you have to go to your temple and that's where we'll see what's going to happen, where we're going to go.

We didn't have no food in the house. We didn't have nothing. It was Passover. We kept Passover really strictly Passover. So there was nothing in the house.

(Well, my father, our family was the first one taken there. We had some neighbors across the street that they were looking on, Jewish people.

6 Well, they didn't know that everybody's going to have the same fate. And this same person across the street, she came into the temple in the afternoon.

And she already had some, she was starting to knead some bread, you know. You can't, we didn't buy ready bread in the store. Everybody made their own bread. But she didn't bake it yet because she didn't have time.

(So she brought the dough that she kneaded into the temple. And I remember she was baking it on the, what, they had a little stove, a little kitchen kind of a thing.

So she was baking that bread like, not the whole bread. Just more or less like a Nautsa (phonetic), you know, but baking it on the stove.

And I said to myself, my God, this looks like coming out of Egypt. Reminded me of that. Well, there's just little incidents that one remembers. I never think of it. All of a sudden it came to me.

(Q YES. IN THE DAYS OF THE EARLY '40'S DID YOU HAVE ANY TROUBLE GETTING FOOD OR OTHER ESSENTIALS?

A No. No. We always had, we always had.

When I think about it today, you know, I think I lived in my own little world there, and I didn't, didn't really see what goes on.

We had -- everything was okay with our family and all my sisters were taken, you know, they were married, they had children.

Everything somehow, you know when you close your eyes and you see only your world and you hope that it's not going to touch you.

Q UH-HUH. WHAT WERE YOU DOING? YOU MUST HAVE FINISHED SCHOOL, I PRESUME.

A Well, yes. I was doing nothing. In Europe it wasn't so unusual that a daughter stays home until she gets married.

Q UH-HUH.

A So there was nothing so unusual about that.

Q SO YOU WERE BASICALLY HELPING OUT IN THE HOUSE?

A Basically helping out in the house, yeah. And my parents sent me to learn how to sew; because they said well, who knows what's going to happen in this world and maybe you will have to make your own living.

So what are you going to do? Okay. Why don't you learn how to sew. And dressmaker is always needed anywhere you go.

So we had, we had at that time an idea that things are going to be bad, that things are going to be bad, that you will have to make your own living individually maybe, that we as parents won't be able to help you or do something for you.

Q BUT YOU DIDN'T SUFFER ANY HARDSHIPS AS FAR AS FOOD OR CLOTHING OR ANYTHING?

A No. No. No.

Q HOW WAS IT WHEN HUNGARY INVADED INTO POLAND?

A Well, in the beginning it wasn't bad. In the beginning it was okay. It just slowly, slowly the rules have changed. It took a while. It wasn't like it was in Germany, in other words. That's why we always thought, you know, it's not going to happen to us. It wasn't so drastic.

Q UH-HUH.

A It was slow. It was a slow going until -- yeah. That's about what I could say about it.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER ANY OF THE RULES OR WHAT THE EARLY ONES WERE?

A Well, the first thing that -- let's see, the rules. Okay. Then we started wearing our yellow star. We had to wear our yellow star. But for not very long time. And you weren't supposed to be out on the street after a certain time.

Like I said, businesses weren't supposed to be owned. And somehow -- I don't know. Somehow, I don't know when I -- you know, I talk about it now and I think about it and I think to myself, my goodness, how stupid one was. You know? How stupid one was.

Q UH-HUH.

A But then when we were already in the temple and we knew that then something is happening, that they are taking us out of the house and we have to leave everything, that this is, this is no good.

And my father said look, I built this temple here, this show. I know every part of it. I know a place where you can hide until they take us away from here. He talked to me.

And then he says, after we, after they take us away, you can go out night and you can go to this and this family, Hungarian -- no, they weren't Hungarian. They were kind of Ukrainian Russian family.

But he worked with that guy a lot. And he said you go to him, and I'm sure that he's going to hide you. But even then, I did not have the guts to do it.

I said whatever gonna happen to you is going to happen to me. I was never out in the world on my own. I was afraid. And I didn't do it.

Q WHEN WAS THIS THAT YOUR FATHER SAID THAT?

A This was already, we were already being gathered to go to the ghetto. This was in 1944 in April right after Passover.

Q SO HE OF COURSE, BY THEN IT WAS VERY CLEAR.

A It was very clear, yeah, that some things, that there's going, something is happening that's not going to be good.

And then they took us into the other city and put us in the ghetto. And there we already knew that this is it. There we met a lot of people from all over the country because we were gathered in one place.

You know, there were pessimists and there were optimists. And the pessimists said this is the end, this is the end, and don't expect anything good to happen to you and don't believe that they take you to work and don't believe this; they just take you to be killed.

Some of them said I came back from the Ukrainian and I saw the people being shot to death and the trenches and all that; they witnessed that. They say you think it's going to happen to us too?

And there were some people who had hopes that yet maybe we can work and maybe the Russians will come, they were so close. Actually, that part of the country in October was already liberated. And they took us away in May.

Q HUH.

A So, you know, we were hoping, hoping.

Q UH-HUH. WHAT WAS THE NAME OF THE TOWN OF
THE GHETTO?

A Nagy Szolos. Serlus in Czech. Nagy Szolos
in Hungarian.

Q SO YOU WERE DESCRIBING THAT THERE WAS THE
END OF PASSOVER, YOU WERE, THEY CAME TO THE DOOR AND YOU
HAD NO SUPPLIES.

A No supplies at all.

Q DID YOU HAVE YOUR CLOTHING YOU COULD TAKE?

A We could take, we could take some clothing.
And they said you don't need anything where you're going.
You don't need too much where you're going.

So we took some bedding, some thing and some
clothes. But what can you take? And they were rushing
us. And these were the Hungarian police. It wasn't the
Germans. These were the Hungarians, the people that we
grew up with.

Q UH-HUH.

A And they said hurry up and hurry up, and you
don't need this and you don't need this and you don't
need that.

Q HAD YOU HEARD ANYTHING ABOUT THE
CONCENTRATION CAMPS OR THE MURDER OF THE Jews?

A No. No.

Q UP TO THAT POINT?

A No.

Q NOTHING?

A Nothing at all. Nothing at all.

Q DID YOU HAVE ANY SENSE THAT YOU WOULD BE
SENT OFF TO A GHETTO?

A Well, in the ghetto we heard that they are,
you know, some people got out of the ghetto, went to work
somewhere, came back to ghetto. And they were talking
the trains are going with people and they are taking them
somewhere, somewhere, and that they are cattle trains,
you know.

We already sensed that there was something
terrible going on. I know that my father was taken into
the Hungarian police or the -- in the ghetto and was also
beaten to give his money and whatever he has, that he has
something hidden and he should reveal where it is.

Because like I said, he was well-to-do, so they
thought that who knows what he has. But it so happens by
that time he didn't have very much.

Q WHEN YOU LEFT THE GHETTO WAS HE ABLE TO TAKE
ANY VALUABLES WITH HIM?

A From the ghetto?

Q NO.

A Into the ghetto?

Q INTO THE GHETTO, YES.

A Do you know what? I don't know.

Q WHO WENT OF YOUR FAMILY?

A Okay. My father, my stepmother. I was then the oldest at home. And my younger sister and my brother. The others were all married. One of my married sisters so happens she was home, and she came with us.

Q SHE WAS AT YOUR FAMILY HOME?

A She was at our family home.

Q AND SHE WENT ALONG WITH YOU BUT THE REST OF HER FAMILY DIDN'T?

A And then we, and then, yes, we were in the ghetto together. And then we met in the ghetto, some of my sisters and our family. You know, eventually they came to the same ghetto.

Q HOW DID YOU GET TO THE GHETTO?

A They took us on horse -- it wasn't on horse. It was like oxes-pulled wagons. Like the pioneers that came here. Okay, they put us on these wagons, and we went to this next town, which was nine kilometers. It wasn't that far.

And as we were going through the village in this ox-pulled cart, the people were standing there behind their gates and behind their window and they were just

looking and didn't run out on the street or scream or say something. Nothing. Nothing. Like they would say good for you, it's good for you that they're taking you away.

Q IT MUST HAVE BEEN A HORRIBLE, HORRIBLE FEELING.

A It was a terrible terrible feeling. And especially, I know my father who, you know, he thought that he's so well-loved in this village, that people really respected him and came for advice to him. Before they went to a lawyer they came to my father for advice. These peasants there. Okay. The nonJewish people. And then when it came time to do something, they just stood by and nothing.

Q WAS THERE ANY BRUTALITY OR THREAT OF BRUTALITY IF YOU DIDN'T IMMEDIATELY GO TO THE GHETTO IN NAGY SZOLOS?

A Well, look, when these policemen, these are like Csendoroks. They are rather, you know, they come in with their guns on their shoulder. You don't do anything. What do you try? What do you try?

Q UH-HUH. DID YOU SEE ANYBODY BEING BRUTALIZED?

A I did not. I did not.

Q SO YOU WENT BY THE OXEN-PULLED WAGON.

A Yes.

Q AND WHAT WAS THE GHETTO LIKE?

A Well, the ghetto, they put us in homes, which they designated to be the ghetto.

It so happened it was a Jewish big, a large, large house. And they, in the one room, gosh, I don't know how many families they put in one room. And we were just hardly had any room to move around. There was right away shortage of food, of course, in the ghetto. There wasn't very much to eat.

But we still didn't hunger. I can't say that we hungered. Somehow they always brought in some food from outside.

I just remember, I had my birthday in May, and I happened to have a boyfriend at that time, and he brought, he was working outside, and he brought me a half loaf of bread. He says this is your birthday present.

(Laughs.)

Q A WONDERFUL PRESENT.

A What a present. What a present. So, and then two days later we were already going to the -- so we were in ghetto like three or four weeks altogether.

Q VERY SHORT.

A Very short. Very short.

Q DID YOU HAVE ENOUGH ROOM IN THE ROOM FOR SLEEPING?

A Well, that's all we had room is for sleeping and walking by the bodies there.

Q WHAT ABOUT TOILET FACILITIES?

A Well, in Europe at that time they had outdoor, outdoor toilet, you know, outhouses.

Q UH-HUH.

A So we waited in line and when you were ready you could go. You went. You were young. Everything was possible. Everything was possible.

Q SO YOU USED AN OUTHOUSE AS YOU WOULD HAVE NORMALLY?

A Yes. Yes.

Q WHAT ABOUT WASHING?

A Washing. Well, we had the wells and we pumped water that we brought up from the well and just washed with it and bathed. But we washed.

Q SO YOU DIDN'T COOK. THE FOOD WAS BROUGHT TO YOU.

A I don't remember cooking. You know, you ask me, I don't know very much these days. I don't remember. I don't know why is it. I don't want to or I don't, but I don't, I don't remember how the everyday life was.

Q CAN YOU REMEMBER ANY, LIKE A DAILY REGIMEN, WHAT THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN?

A I know I wasn't really hungry. That much I

(know. I think that's my experience. Maybe if I would talk to my sister she would remind me of certain things. But I, that's about what I remember.

Q AND SO YOUR FAMILY WAS TOGETHER STILL IN THIS ONE TOWN.

9 A Yes. We were all together. And then we were -- you know, somehow they tried to keep the families together. I guess they figured that it's a safer way to do it.

(And then one morning came the order that we have to go, we have to take with us what little as possible and we have to go to the train station.

By then we knew that we are also being deported somewhere, we have no idea where. And even at that time even the Germans, German soldiers were standing on the street with their guns.

So we really, nobody could run then. But there were some people that got out of the ghetto. There were some people that ran away, and there were some people that were brought back into the ghetto.

Q BASICALLY RAN AWAY.

(A They simply just, you know, got out of the ghetto. And they survived. They survived in the woods.

(Like I said, the Russians came in in October and, you know, there were people that did that. There were

people that were caught and brought back to the ghetto. There were people that I met in Auschwitz that were caught and came to Auschwitz.

Q SO IT WASN'T A WALLED GHETTO, OR WAS IT?

A Well, it wasn't walled, like they couldn't do it in a few weeks. It's not like Warsaw. You know, it was, just designated this is the ghetto. So you don't get out.

Q UH-HUH.

A And I never tried to go. I never did. But, you know.

Q AT ANY TIME UP TO THE POINT OF BEING TAKEN TO THE GHETTO DID YOUR FAMILY EVER CONSIDER GOING TO PALESTINE?

A No.

Q NO.

A No. Even after my, like I told you about this distant relative to went to Budapest, she was in hiding and she survived. She went to Israel at that time. She's still alive. And her daughter too. And she was writing us letter from Budapest. She says you have to get yourself warm clothes. Winter is coming, which meant bad times are coming.

Well, we probably could have gone to Budapest and hide there. There was a lot of Jews that hid in

Budapest.

I have some people, one of my sister-in-laws was one of them. And, you know, I know people that did it. I don't know. We were so, I don't know what, we were so dumb or so -- no guts. I don't know. But we didn't do it.

Q IT WAS CERTAINLY COMMON.

A Didn't do it.

Q PEOPLE DIDN'T TAKE AN --

A No. And somehow, like I said, my father always somehow, he had hopes that nothing very bad will happen.

But my mother, she had, she had a feeling, she was saying it's going to be terrible. She said I had a dream, she says, I had such a terrible dream, something so terrible is going to happen. This was already in the ghetto. But then people were, you know, dreaming and whatever.

Q YOU COULDN'T DO MUCH BY THEN ANYWAY.

A No. We couldn't do much by then. But there was a time where we really could do, could get out. And we didn't.

Q DID YOU MEET UP WITH ANY OF YOUR OLDER SISTERS IN THE GHETTO?

A Yes. Two of my sisters that came to the

ghetto with their family. One of my sister that she, nobody survived from her family. And my other sister whose daughter survived with us, and she lives in Texas right now.

This is, I have some picture of her. This is one of my sister and her husband. And this is the child that survived.

(Displaying photograph.)

Q OH. SHE'S SO CUTE.

But your sister, this sister and her husband did not survive?

A No. Not her husband nor her. Her husband died already some time in February. He was in the camp and whatnot, and I heard that he lived. But then of course he --

Q MAYBE THIS WOULD BE A GOOD TIME, YOU HAVE A LARGE FAMILY IN ALL DIFFERENT FATES, I PRESUME, TO GIVE US THE NAMES OF THESE RELATIVES. THE NAME OF YOUR FATHER AND YOUR STEPMOTHER.

A Okay. My father's --

Q AND SISTERS.

A My father's name was Eugene Zisovits. We called him Jenó, in Hungarian Zisovits. My mother was Rose, Rosie in Hungarian.

Q DO YOU KNOW HER MAIDEN NAME?

A Yes. Samuel. I'm talking about my stepmother.

You see, my real mother I did not know. But my real mother's name was Lenke Zisovits, and she was born Klein. I'm named after her. And my older sister who did not come back, neither her nor her two children, her name was also Rose. And her husband was Hugo. And their last name was Schreiber.

One of their daughters was named Eva and son was named Victor. I have a picture of the two of them here, the children.

These pictures I came by from my aunt who lived in the United States before I was born. She came here. That's my father's youngest sister. And these are the two children of my sisters that did not come back.

(Exhibiting photograph.)

And this is my sister that's their mother.

Q ROSE.

A The one in the middle, Rose.

(Exhibiting photograph.)

Q AND WHO ARE THE OTHER TWO?

A They're just friends, I suppose. I didn't know them.

Then I have my other sister who was, her name was Juci. And she was married to Corungood. That was her

maiden -- married name. She is the one that her daughter survived. She didn't.

And the third sister was Bozsi in Hungarian. We say Bozsi, but her name was Elisabeth Weinberger. She's the one that had two children, and her husband survived and came to the United States.

My youngest brother and only brother, he did not survive. He was 16 years old. And they say that he lived 'til February, February when we were already free. He only died then. We were free in February for a reason, because we finally got the guts and we ran away.

Q OH, IT'S AMAZING. YOUR OLDER SISTER ROSE, DO YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO HER?

A Oh, she went to the left side, the gas chamber. I mean, there's no question. We arrived at the same time to the gate. Men separate, you had to men separat and women, I'm sure you know the story.

Q YES.

A And it's an interesting story here.

We were walking towards Mengele, and he was pointing left and right and right and left. And he told me to go right, and my younger sister to the right and my, the sister that was home, that was married, and so happened she was home, her husband was in forced labor at that time. You probably heard about the forced labor.

So that's why she was home. She didn't have any children.

So she, he says to her, Mengele, to the right, and to my mother to the left. And that's her mother really.

And she says to Mengele in German, why do you send me on this side? I am a married woman, and that's my mother. And Mengele said to her in German cans du laufen? That means can you run? Run. And he pushed her among the living. And she's alive today. And my mother went to the gas chamber.

Q THIS IS YOUR YOUNGEST SISTER.

A This is my old -- no. She's older than I am. She's nine years older than I am. She's my real stepsister.

But we grew up together and we feel we are sisters. And she survived. And my mother went to the gas chamber and Mengele said constalaf, lauf.

You know, sometimes fate, it's meant for you to live and you live. So when they were at the gate selecting, my older sister Rose, who wasn't that old, my God, she must have been 39 or 38 years old, and she had her daughter with her, Eva. She was about 19. And she was holding onto her mother, you know, under her arm, and Mengele said you go to the left.

But we didn't know exactly at that time what was

happening. And I never forget my niece's face like a triumphant smile. You see, I go with my mother.

So then we were, then was my sister and I and my younger sister were the three oldest. And some cousins also.

Q AND YOUR ELDEST SISTER, HER OTHER CHILD, WHAT HAPPENED TO THE OTHER CHILD?

A My oldest sisters?

Q UH-HUH. SISTERS?

A Both of them perished. Well, the older one that went with her mother perished, and the younger one was a son, and he apparently died during the time. He did not survive.

Q AND --

A I don't know much about him.

Q AND THE NEXT SISTER AFTER ROSE.

A And then the next sister after Rose, okay, there was another sister in there. Her name was Helen. Her married name was Smook. She survived. Her and her husband, they survived. They never had any children. They came back and lived here in the United States together. But she passed away seven years ago. I mean, she was like 16 years older than I am.

Q UH-HUH.

A Well, she survived, so she was okay.

And the third sister, she came to the camp with her daughter, and she was there for a few days. And she was sick. She just said she cannot stand this and she's not going to survive this and she cannot manage this.

And she had problem with her heart. And they were not in the same building as we were, but we were in the same lagger, you know, outside we met. But we were in the same building. And she says oh, golly, if I could have a piece of onion. I don't know why I would like to eat a piece of onion.

And at that time I was already working in the place where we were selecting clothes and quilts, mainly quilts from people that brought it in.

And there was a Polish man, a Jewish/Polish man. And sometimes, you know, we made eyes at each other. After all, we were young people.

And I said to him, is it possible that you could get an onion for me? And he says I'll bring it to you tomorrow when I come here, I'll bring you an onion. Sure enough he brought an onion.

By the time I went to see my sister, there is my niece. She was not quite 18, crying. She says, My mother gave up. My mother says she's sick, she wants to go in the hospital. And they took her.

Well, they took her. And here my niece and I said

I don't know what's happened, what's going to happen.
You come to our block and you're going to be with us.

Well, probably somebody from that block had to go out, because you had numbers so many. But we had to stay together. So by that time we were three sisters and one niece.

Q AND WHAT HAPPENED TO THE SISTER THAT WENT TO THE HOSPITAL?

A (Shrugging shoulders head.)

What happened? What happened to the others? We never heard from her.

Q YOU DIDN'T KNOW WHETHER SHE DIED THERE OR WAS IN --

A By that time we already knew what was happening. We knew whoever went to the hospital, there was no hospital. We knew that who was sick was sick.

Q UH-HUH.

A That by that time, believe me, we were quite educated. We knew already what's happening.

And we knew also what happened to our parents, because when we came in, into that shower, because we had to take a shower and they were shaving us, and I think I was one part also very, very traumatic part when we looked at each other all shaven. I know I got hysterical. Not that it helped me, but that's what I

was. That humiliation. Your hair. It was just a terrible thing.

And they gave us some clothes, you know, because we had to drop our clothes, naturally. And we were taken into the blocks, we call them blocks building, and that's when they, we heard the rumors.

You know, the ones that were there before us already, what do you think, where are your parents? What do you think where they are? Look outside. Do you see the burning chimney? Do you see that smoke? That's where they are.

You know, it didn't sink. It just didn't sink. The smell was terrible. They said you don't believe it? Can't you smell it?

You know, they were very angry with us, these people that were there before us, because they said that we're so dumb, we Hungarians, how did we let ourselves -- how did it happen to us when we knew already what's happening and we heard and how could we be so dumb?

So they were angry with us. And they just bluntly said everything was happening here.

Well, I don't know. Somehow human nature takes many things. Human nature is amazing.

Q UH-HUH.

A God forbid what one can take.

Q YES. WHAT ONE CAN GET USED TO.

A What one can get used to.

And all that mattered is our survival from then on, for us to survive. We always kept together. The family, the four of us were liberated together. The four of us went through everything. We were together as cousins.

I met one of my other sisters that was married, who lives here. We got separated. But the four of us, we always stayed together, the original four.

Q HUM. WHEN YOU WERE FIRST SENT FROM THE GHETTO TO THE CAMP WHO OF YOU WENT ALL TOGETHER? IT WAS YOU AND YOUR PARENTS ALSO?

A We all went together in one wagon; in one wagon we went together.

Q AND YOUR BROTHER?

A My brother, yes.

Q YOUR SISTER THAT WAS MARRIED WAS HOME?

A The sister that was married was home.

Q WHAT WAS HER NAME?

A There was only four children.

The sister that was married? That's the one I told you -- oh, I didn't introduce her. Her name is Isabel. Her name is now Isabel Coon. She was born Isabel Martin was her maiden name. Yeah. Isabel Martin.

She's my stepmother's daughter.

Q I SEE.

A And she lives here in Burlingame with her husband. She's married to a fellow named Kun.

Q MARTIN DOESN'T SOUND LIKE A JEWISH NAME IN EUROPE.

A No. But they were Jewish people.

Q AND THEN OTHER SISTERS, OR NIECES, NIECES AND NEPHEWS THAT CAME WITH YOU, OR JUST ISABEL AND YOUR --

A Yes. Yes. Yes.

My oldest sister, her husband and her two children were with us. The sister whose daughter joined us lately, like I told you, they came maybe a day later. I don't know why. But apparently they took them by sections or -- I don't know what it was.

Q AND YOUR BROTHER'S NAME.

A My brother's name was Rudolph Zisovits. And we called him Duty.

Q AND SO I PRESUME YOU'VE, YOU WENT BY TRAIN?

A Yes. We went with the cattle train. I don't know how many of us in the train, but I know there was no room to move.

Everybody wanted to be at the window, to breathe a little fresh air. It so happened it was May, so it

wasn't cold. It was rather warm. It was going and going and going. And of course the facilities to go to the bathroom were unbelievable.

Q THE POT?

A The pot, yeah. And there was no privacy absolutely. And I remember 'til that time I never ate trife (phonetic).

And for some reason, I don't know how, they had, somebody had something that wasn't kosher, and I looked at my father, and my father said go ahead and eat it, just go ahead and eat it.

Q YOU MEAN EVEN IN THE GHETTO --

A Even in the ghetto we still had kosher apparently. Because this was the first incident when he said to me, you go ahead and eat it. So that's when we were together.

Q HOW LONG WAS THE TRIP?

A The trip took a few days. It took some days. We went through beautiful countryside, through the, from Hungary to go to Poland, at that time Auschwitz. We went through beautiful mountains.

To look outside that window, whatever that window was, and to see all that, and here you are, all locked in, it's a most terrible feeling.

Q WHAT ABOUT WATER? WERE YOU GIVEN WATER?

(A We were given some water. But it was, it was terrible. We were -- yes. We were hungry. Yes, we were thirsty. But I say again, we were young, and what you can do when you're young is unbelievable. I mean, unbelievable.

2 Q WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR BOYFRIEND?

A He never came back. He was also deported and never heard of him. Never.

Q SO THE END OF THE TRIP --

A The end of the trip.

(Well, we were in, like I said, then we came down and everybody was happy to get out of there, because after all you could stand up and you can walk and you can breathe fresh air, while a death was awaiting us that we didn't exactly believe or know. I'm here.

Q DID YOU ARRIVE AT NIGHT WHEN YOU CAME?

A No. We arrived daytime. We arrived daytime.

Q AND WHAT WAS THAT LIKE?

(A Well, we saw train loads of people getting out on one side, train load the other side. You know, not only our train but some other. We all had to walk nice lines.

(We saw people in striped clothes working like garden, gardening around. They were all so quiet. They

never, you know, they hardly looked at you or anything.

No, we thought okay, we're probably going to work like this too. Couldn't be so terrible or could be so terrible. Little did we know.

Q UH-HUH. WERE THERE DOGS?

A Dogs? Well, Mengele was standing there with a dog. I mean, nobody would dare do anything. We didn't even know where we are. We didn't know where we are with we arrived. We didn't have an idea this was Auschwitz. We just got to know afterwards from people who were there already, you know, what this is and you know what's happening here.

And like I said, do you know what that burning is? Do you know that your parents are in there? That's when we knew where we are.

And we really, in Auschwitz doing nothing really except, like I said, we were sorting some of this stuff. But those were more or less like the privileged that did it.

Q UH-HUH.

A Most of the people, we just sat around and did nothing. Just get up in the morning, stand upheld, and if it was raining or shining or, whatever it was, and counting all the time. And of course they never counted right. So they let us stand there in the sun and rain

and I don't know what. And that was like twice a day.

It's a terrible, terrible thing that you are locked up like that and you have all the barbed wires around you and you know if you touch that that that's electrified. You know, it was -- how do you say it?

Q YEAH. ELECTROCUTED.

A Yeah. Electrocuted. So nobody would touch it.

But see, the guards sitting there up there in their lookouts and guns just (demonstrating) pointing at you.

I always had hopes somehow that I survive. I always had hopes that I survive, that I'll live to tell this story and I'll live to, to be here.

Q UH-HUH.

A So somehow, I don't know if it was, that I really felt it, I really felt it, I think I did. I really think I did.

Then we were taken away from Auschwitz in October in a very rainy, ugly, cold day in the work camp. See, the Russians were very close already. You could hear the guns almost, you know. You could hear everything. They were really close.

Well, they didn't, as you know, they didn't want Auschwitz to be there, so they don't have any witnesses

of what happened there. And we were still strong and young.

Okay that we were starving, but somehow not as much as later yet. Because if we worked where we worked, we always got hold of some food for some reason.

Q HOW DID YOU MANAGE THAT?

A It's funny how you do that.

If you found a scarf, a piece of material, you would take that out, which you weren't supposed to, but you did, and you sold it to another heftling for what, for a piece of bread, for a half a dish of his soup or whatever -- her soup, I should say, because women were separate.

So you kind of, if you were smart enough and lucky enough, somehow you could manage. You managed. If you didn't give up hope.

Why I say this is because I had there a, she was a cousin of my stepsister. Lovely girl. She was 20 years old. Beautiful, blond. She was really such a beautiful girl. She refused to eat. She doesn't want to eat trife (phonetic). She refused to eat.

Well, what happened? She starved. She starved to death. So you had to want to live. You had to want to do anything to stay alive.

Q HOW DID YOU MANAGE TO GET THAT GOOD JOB?

A One of my cousins, her name is Eva, she also lives here, she's married to a man named Borof. Her maiden name is also Zisovits. She was a very good-looking girl. She was tall and blond and carried herself beautifully.

And one day this, of course, all these workers, we're all Jewish, they came around and says, he said, I need some women to work in number three block to sort something. Who wants to work?

And we ran there. Of course, whatever, let's see what's going on there.

And here my cousin, you know, being so tall and so, she was a very pretty girl, and he picked her. He says you come first and you pick the girls you want. So who did she pick? The family and the friends, naturally. So that's how we got the job.

Q UH-HUH.

A Just sheer luck. Just sheer luck. You have to have a little muscle, as you say.

Q WHAT WAS THE BLOCK LIKE?

A Well, the block was, they say that they kept those for horses. They had these bunks, one above each other. We lived on the higher one, the highest one, which was very close to the ceiling so it could get very, very hot there too.

Then all of us had to sleep on one bunk like that. 10 girls. And it was very small. And one wanted to turn, we all had to turn.

But, you know, we also smuggled out some of the quilts from the quilt place. I mean, you know, you were a little bit enterprising. Next time they took it away from us, well, that was okay too.

Q DID YOU GET PUNISHED ONCE THEY FOUND FOR THESE THINGS?

A You know, talking about punishment, I will sound not like one of the really the survivors who's going to say what terrible, terrible things happened to her. It never happened to me.

Once I got hold of potatoes, raw potatoes, I don't know how, don't ask me, I don't know how it happened, the only thing stayed in my mind was I wanted to bake those potatoes or cook those potatoes. And behind the block in the back we started a fire. Not only me but a few.

And the guards saw the fire from up there, so they right away sent out somebody what's going on. Here came this beautiful SS girl. What's going on? Oh. Oh. They all ran away, and I was the only one that got stuck there. She says you, what are you doing?

I said I'm trying to boil potatoes. Do you know you're not supposed to do it? Yes, I do. Come on in my,

in the room of the block elders, that, you know, the block elders, they had a room of their own. You come in the room. Well, the whole block, we were about, God forbid, a thousand people in the block. I mean, all these women and this, this is the end of her, that's for sure. It's the end of her.

I go after her, and I go in the block elder's room and she starts talking to me, she says you know what you did? You you know you're not supposed to do it? You know what you, you deserve for that?

And I looked at her and I said, I don't know why. I still don't know how it came to me. I said oh, my God, you couldn't do that to me. You're so beautiful.

The woman smiled, and she said I'm just warning you this time. But don't tell them outside what happened.

When I walked out of there alive and not beaten up, they couldn't believe it. They just couldn't believe what happened. So I don't know. I think I, I somehow had always faith. I always believed. Why did I say that? I don't know.

Q YOU CHARMED HER, BUT SHE WAS KIND TO YOU ALSO.

A She was. I -- and she wasn't a kind person. I mean, mind you, she wasn't one of the kindest person.

It was a moment, or was it my fate? I probably was meant to live.

Q PERHAPS.

A So --

Q WHAT ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE? WERE OTHER PEOPLE PUNISHED IN THOSE WAYS?

A Yes, they were. They were beaten. They were punished. They were -- well, yes, they were. All kinds of things happened. We saw it.

Q IT'S TERRIBLE TO TALK ABOUT IT.

A It's terrible to talk about. Somehow it looks like I always want to think of the good things that happened in the bad times.

And sometimes I think to myself, my goodness, how come I think always what the good what happened? How come I don't remember it or don't want to remember the bad things?

Well, like I say again, I was, we were one of the fortunate ones that nothing really so terrible among us, was the four of us and the cousins that we were together, happened. Then we were taken away from there to a working camp, as I said.

Q THE BLOCK ELDER, DID YOU SAY SHE WAS NOT A PARTICULARLY KIND ONE?

A No. It wasn't the block elder. She was one

of us. She was one of the girls that I knew her from home.

Q OH.

A No. I'm talking about the German girl.

Q OH.

A Oh, I'm talking about the German SS girl.

Q I SEE.

A Oh. It's not block elders that --

No. No. We went to the block elder's room, and there this German kept saying to me, do you know, but coming to you know that, and to her I said it, she's so beautiful and that she couldn't do a thing like that to me.

Q BUT THE BLOCK ELDER TO YOURSELF WAS NOT AN UNKIND PERSON PARTICULARLY.

A No, no, no. I didn't have any problem with her. She was from, she was from the city where we were in the ghetto, really.

Q UH-HUH.

A I mean, I knew her, she knew me. Not that we did any favors to each other, but, I mean, we knew each other. No. She was okay. She was block elder because she spoke very good German.

Q HOW ABOUT YOU? DID YOU SPEAK GERMAN?

A Some, but not as good as she. You know,

some people spoke better, some less. Oh, I got along all right.

Q EVEN WHEN YOU FIRST GOT TO THE CAMP DID YOU KNOW ANY GERMAN THEN?

A Yes. It was compulsory in the school to learn German.

In Czech school we had to learn German, we had to learn Russian because we had a lot of Russian Ukrainians living in the area. As a matter of fact, my father spoke Russian too.

Q SO KNOWING SOME GERMAN I'M SURE WAS VERY HELPFUL FOR YOU IN THE BEGINNING, GETTING IN THE CAMP.

A I didn't really know any German.

Q OH. NO, I MEAN KNOWING SOME GERMAN LANGUAGE.

A Oh, yeah. The language, sure. By all means it was good to know. But not that it was necessary or it was -- no, I can't say that I -- I spoke to this woman German, to this SS woman.

Q WOULDN'T YOU HAVE BEEN GIVEN ORDERS AND DIRECTIONS IN GERMAN IN THE CAMP?

A What were the orders. To stand in line. To march. To go. To come.

Q UH-HUH.

A Those words you knew anyway, so that wasn't,

it wasn't foreign to you. We weren't spoken to or have conversation or anything of that sort.

Q WERE YOU TATTOOED?

A No.

Q WHY WERE YOU NOT TATTOOED?

A I don't know. We came, our group was not tattooed. And groups before and groups after, and they were.

But there are many of us that were not tattooed. I have two of my sister-in-laws, my husband's sister, they both have tattoos. My husband doesn't.

Q HUM.

A I guess was how they felt about it. I don't know. I don't know what their whim was, actually.

Q SO THAT KIND OF GETS ME BACK TO THE ENTRANCE PROCESS, BECAUSE MOST TATTOOING WOULD HAVE BEEN PART OF THAT.

A Yeah.

Q YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT HAVING THE SHOWERS.

A Yeah.

Well, we came in. Then we were told we had to disrobe, take everything off. Everything off. Your jewelry, your earring, your everything, you know. Try to keep this, try to keep that.

And they came in around, no way, no way, no way

(was there, you know, sticks that they were walking around. Everything's got to be taken off.

So we were completely naked. And they took us in the shower. So we were the lucky ones because we really went in a shower. But we didn't have soap. We didn't have a towel. We didn't have anything.

Go in the showers and in the shower. The shower was cold.

(Then I, like I said, they were shave -- no, first they were shaving us before we went in the shower. And then I got real hysterical, to go through this very humiliating thing.

And we looked at each other, you know, and almost couldn't believe that it's happening to us.

Okay. So we take the shower, and then they gave us some clothes. They gave us the striped clothes, and then later they took that away from us and they gave us just clothes from whatever clothes they had.

6 And they were taking into the, they call that gypsy camp where the gypsies were. Not that we saw very much of them. And that's where we were. And for days we just sat there. We didn't do anything. It was so terrible. Just to sit there and to do nothing. Nothing to do.

(It started to be so warm, so, you know, it was

(getting to be in the middle of, end of May and the weather was getting to be warmer. It was just a terrible, terrible feeling to be so nowhere. Nowhere. What, what's happening? What is going on?

And then of course we knew the trains were coming because we heard the trains coming. And some people were thrown into our block, some more people.

And then came people from Holland and people from other countries. And we found out that they were even less capable of coping with things than we were.

Q IN WHAT SENSE?

(A Well, they were just giving up. Just giving up. Just not caring.

Because we still, my sisters and I and some of the friends that were close to each other there, we would go and wash ourselves every day. Try to keep ourselves alive.

But some just gave up and they didn't care and they would just lie there, cry there, you know. It was terrible, terrible to see.

Q WERE THE SO-CALLED MUZULMEN IN THE CAMP TOO?

(A Well, the muzulmen came later, at least what I saw. I myself didn't see in Auschwitz.

(When we came to the -- of course, we all lost a lot of weight. Then we came to the working camp which

was Bierbie (phonetic) was called, the place was called Bierbie (phonetic). It was not very far from Breslow.

And our job was to dig ditches for tanks to get trapped in. This was in October. And it started to be very cold. And we were digging. That's when we started to be really hungry and really suffering.

'Til then I can't say that besides being hungry and thirsty that we suffered any, any bodily abusement or anything like that.

Like I said, we were one of these fortunate ones. But when we came to this camp, that's when, you know, to work and with the whip was very easily used.

And our hands were freezing and frozen and our fingers and no gloves, of course, and no warm clothes and wooden shoes. We took out the straw from our beds, from our bunks, and stuffed it into our coat to keep us warm. And of course, what we looked like I don't have to tell you, you know. Humps and this and that.

But they kept us in some way warm. In the meantime we could see the planes flying over, you know. They were so close. Everything was so close. So much to the end.

And here we were, just dying because -- yes, we were dying. We were terribly, terribly hungry and terribly, terribly cold.

And I know I got hold of a mirror one day, I don't know how, and I looked at myself and I said that's not me. It's impossible that it would be me.

You know, you yourself don't see yourself. And this was, we were there, we were working there. People were dying. Yes, people started to look like muzulmen, yes. Just skin and bone. Yellow skin. People froze to death. I mean, in our cells, the icicles were hanging, you know. In the morning we got up the icicles were hanging there. No heat. Here are the four of us sleeping in that one bed.

There we had, I mean, was a round shelf like this and sections of the bed. So like four, five were sleeping there.

And the four of us, well, somehow we managed to take our three blankets on the top of all of us so it kept us a little warmer than to have a single blanket for everything. One underneath and three on the top and of course when we had to move we all had to move.

We were there 'til January. And in the morning we were told we have to go, we have to leave because the Russians are coming and we've got to go.

That's when the death march started. That's when for days we didn't get any food, any water. Stopped at night in villages where they had these, oh, stalls for

(the animals to sleep, cows and whatnot. And they put us in there to sleep. And it was dirty and it was smelly and there was no food.

And we were just plotting how to run away, how to stay in one of these villages, how to get away from, how to survive.

Because we knew that this we cannot survive. We saw people in the ditches dead. We saw men in Talisum, you know, wrapped around them and lying there dead. We saw women.

(And if you stopped your death march, they said you don't want to go? Okay. And they shot them. I mean, we saw that.

So the four of us, we always, what are we going to do and how are we going to survive? This is impossible to survive.

And whenever, as we were marching, once in a while they gave us something.

As we were marching there was, we went to a field where they had sugar beets. It was winter, and there was some left in the field.

(And all of us, you know, ran to the fields. And these Germans, you know, they got petrified that this group just like that is running away like a herd.

Q JUST THE FOUR OF YOU?

A No, no. Almost all of us. You know, everybody running because there is sugar beets, you know. It's food.

And one of the Germans hit my sister with a whip so terribly she could hardly get up. And from then on she said I don't care what happens to me. This was my older sister. I don't care what happens to me, you go on. We don't go on without you. Just -- and if you don't want to go on without me, then we have to run out of the group and stay in one of these villages.

We went to villages that people did not live there anymore. They all left these villages. They were little German villages.

They didn't want to be liberated by the Russians because the Russians were the, were kind to be liberated. They wanted to be liberated by the Americans.

And so was our group. They were just dragging us, dragging us. So one day when we were already really end of our wits and we were very hungry and looked like, like you say, muzulmen, yes, that's what we looked like, we were going on a bend like this (demonstrating). The village street was turning like this.

The guard was on the front, the guard was on the back, the guard was on the side, but in that bend nobody saw you. Okay? This was just the spare of the second

not moment but tenth of a second, shall I say.

My sister says -- and there was a little farm, little yard and whatnot, and my sister says "now." And she started and I next to her. And my younger sister and my niece, they were the same age, those two like zombies, you know, they just came because we went.

But they didn't care. They couldn't care less if we leave them there in the ditch, if they shot; they just couldn't care. Couldn't care.

And so we ran into this yard and straight in a pigsty. And we were in there, and there was one girl sitting there. One girl who also ran away from the crowd. One. She was a Hungarian-speaking girl. We knew she was one of us, I mean. And so we all of a sudden became five. And we were sitting there and listening the group to go by.

And we heard them, you know, it's quiet, it's quiet, it's quieted down, so we knew they passed. And in the meantime, well, whatever, if there are any Germans here, if there aren't any Germans here, whatever will happen. Right now we are, we got away.

Q COULD YOU SEE THE PIGSTY FROM THE STREET?

A It was visible, but when we ran, we didn't know where we were going to run in.

But it so happened it was open, we ran in. And it

was walled. It was walled. It wasn't an open thing. So, of course, there were some grains, what was given to the pigs, and we started eating. It was good.

Q UH-HUH. I BET.

8

A And this was daytime, and we said well, we'll wait 'til it's dark, and then we're going to look out, because daytime, you know, you can't do that.

By the time our hair was a little longer. We already had some hair. We weren't numbered. We took out the straw from here and the straw from there and tried to kind of make ourselves look more like human beings-- because we figured whatever is here, we have to face it.

And we decided that we are not Jewish. We are not Jews. We are Czechs. And we were working in the factory Breslav, because we knew there were factories, we knew there were Czech prisoners too.

And they bombed, which they were bombing, we could hear it, we could see it. We could see the burning, that we are one of those. If it's gonna work or not, but we did it.

So we talked this over so we have the same story, all of us. And we said okay. Always the girls who don't look Jewish at all are going to be in the front. And the ones that look a little more sematic -- and this girl that was sitting there, she was definitely sematic. The

four of us, you could go this way, that way. Yeah.

My older sister was blond, my niece was blond, and my younger sister and me, we were brunettes. But you could be, you could not be. Okay?

So it was getting to be dark and we looked outside and it was quiet, absolutely just dead quiet.

So we saw across the street there were houses. And so it was snow, I want you to know it was January 28. Real snow. Cold.

And we ran across the street and we went to this house and everything was closed so we went in the back way and broke in the window and all crawled, climbed into the house. There were no burglar alarms.

(Laughs.)

We go in there, and the house, I have to give this to the Germans, was immaculately clean. Immaculately clean.

They left very short while before, because we found some warm, warm food, some left-over food which was still warm in the kitchen.

Well, we were in the dark, but we ate whatever we found. Whatever. We ate grease, we ate lard, we ate whatever there was possible to find in that house, which wasn't very much, five of us, we ate.

Then we said whatever happens, let's go in the

bedroom. Two backs together, all five of us going to sleep together because whatever happens we don't want to be separate. See what's going to happen. All clothed. We didn't dare take off our clothes.

But we were so sick from the food we ate. I mean, our stomachs wasn't used to anything. All of a sudden eat this lard, heavy stuff, whatever.

Well, we didn't ever know -- the toilet was an outdoor toilet. I'm sure they didn't have inside, which we knew they don't because it was a village house. How can you go? You don't even have time to go. So I shouldn't say it, we used some dishes from the kitchen.

(Laughs.)

So anyway, we survived the night and none of us died. Luckily. Just because we were young. That's all.

Q WAS DIARRHEA THE ONLY SYMPTOM?

A Diarrhea. That's all. We all had diarrhea. I mean, the cramps and --.

So next day we looked around in the house a little bit and there was some water, there was some, we washed ourself what we could and changed clothes. We found some clothes in the closet.

But we wouldn't dare go outside, you see. We were afraid in the daytime to go outside.

We kind of peeked outside and didn't see anything.

The sun was shining. It was a beautiful winter day. But we didn't dare go out.

But second day we said well, okay, what are we going to do? Starve to death here? I mean, there was no more food here. We're going to starve here, then.

So we decided at night -- yeah, in the meantime, I think it was about the same time -- no, it was later. Yeah. Okay.

So we decided we're going to go out into the other houses and we're going to break in or try to go in and break in and find some food.

So in the evening was me. My sister, my older sister who was hit from the Germans, she really suffered. She was really in pain. So we kind of let her not do anything for her to rest.

So me and this strange girl that we find there and I think one of my niece, one niece of mine, we went, the three of us went to see some food, which we did.

We went in the house. It was dark. We don't know where we're going, but somehow we knew where to find a kitchen somehow, you know. And we got some food and whatever we found and we brought it over. So it was another day that we can get by.

Well, on the third day we got a little bit brave and we went out the daytime. Well, we encountered an

Ukrainian man who was taken by the Germans to work on their farms.

The people left the places, but these servants stayed to take care of everything. Probably figuring if the Russians are coming, they are Russians too, you know, it's not going to be so terrible.

So this guy, you know, he sees us and he says halt. Shall we or shouldn't we? We started running. He didn't have no gun. So we ran and ran.

Finally where do you run? Why do you run? I don't even know this village. Where do you run? So we ran in the backyard into an outhouse. Well, he caught up with us, you know, and he comes there and he says get out. Who are you?

Oh, we said, well, we are Czechs, the story. We spoke beautiful Czech at that time. We all spoke very nicely.

This girl, the Hungarian girl, did not, so we told her shut up, you are a mute. You are a deaf mute. And she had to play the deaf mute because otherwise she'll give us away.

So we said we are so and so. And he saw that we're speaking so well the language, you know. And he said, he said well, we are the farm workers, and we need help, maybe you could help work with us, you know.

He took us in the house, only the three of us, they took us into the house and they fed us with food. And they was, gave us to drink milk. Milk.

At home I wouldn't drink milk if there was any top on it. Do you know in Europe you don't have the homogenized milk like you have it here. But it has the, it has the top.

And God forbid my mother would give me drink milk or in the coffee and a little bit of that floating there, I would just die from it, naturally. And here there was a woman in the house, also Ukrainian, she gives me a glass of milk and the stuff is floating.

Did I drink it. Did I drink it. Funny how little things stay in your mind, how little things stay in your mind more so than the really big and terrible.

Well, anyway, they said well, maybe you should try to work for us. And we said okay. But we have some other girls here too, and we took him with us and we showed him.

My sister says you're crazy. You don't trust a Ukrainian. They are the biggest antisemitites. And how did it happen? She was the advisor, you know. She was nine years older than we were. And we had no choice.

So we went to work for them for a day, maybe, or so. And then he comes to tell us that the Germans are

coming back. The Russians were pushed back and the Germans are coming back. What are we going to do? I mean, you can't fool the Germans too much.

And so we backed him, that was my older sister's idea, we backed him to put us on the loft in the farm in the loft in the, that we are going to survive, that we are going to survive because the war is going to end.

I mean, we knew the war is ending. I mean, there was such fighting and such noise and such bombing. And they themselves said that the war is ending, you know, those workers.

He said okay. I'll do it, but I don't know, you know. Sure enough, he put us up on the loft. And we kind of peeked outside, what's going on. Yes, the Germans, SS came back and German people, some people.

Well, we somehow said this is the end of us for sure. I mean, we cannot live here very long without anything, and they're going to find us. And they had dogs too, you know.

But our darling Ukrainian antisemite, he brought the Russians straight to us. All of a sudden see that him and him are walking and they're coming closer, closer to us. And he's bringing a ladder to walk up there. And we ourselves among ourselves, now what? Now what?

So we said okay. We'll just keep to our story.

And again, us who are more fair, we're going to be in the front and you just stay in the back and let the German, we talk to him.

So he comes up and he says what are you doing? How did you get here? Well, he heard the story. Well, he says okay, we need workers on the farm, we need workers badly. If you're going to work, we're going to feed you. Sure, we want to work.

But you have to go into the school. There was a school, and we gather people because there are other people like you there too.

We had no choice, just to go where he wanted us to go. And sure enough we found there are other people. And he found there are Czech people, it so happened but they were not Czech/Czech. They were Jewish/Czech people. They also were in the camp. They also were in the march, in the death march and whatnot.

So right away we know we could converse. And we talked what's happening, what's going on. So it was the same thing. They ran away also like we did and they also were found out. And they also were offered to work for the Germans and that they get food.

Q WERE THEY ALSO TRYING TO PASS AS CZECH PRISONERS?

A What their story was, they were, they really

didn't even look Jewish.

And, you know, one of them even said to me later when we became friends that she never knew she was Jewish. It just so happened that her grandmother, whoever, was Jewish. So that was in the afternoon.

And so next morning then we were going to go and work for the Germans, you come back to this farm, and I don't know, you go there and there, whatever.

And in the morning we hear noises and geez, what is going on? We look out the window and we see a Russian soldier.

So the Russians came through, since yesterday to the next day the Germans left.

We heard a noise, you know. Noise. Noise, noise going on, but we didn't dare go out during the night.

So next morning the Russians came in. I mean, so we were liberated February the 8th, 1945. Not that the Russians were very nice.

We went through a lot of hardship with them, but at least we had what to eat and we didn't have to be afraid they were going to kill us, that we are, you know, risking our life or whatever.

Q WHAT WAS THE HARDSHIP?

A The hardship was they wanted to sleep with us.

(See, they were, by that time we were already about nine of us, you know, with these Czechs, and we were all young girls.

And we ate a little bit more so we weren't looking exactly like the worst of the worst. And we already had some German clothes on, you know, so it wasn't so terribly obvious that we are heftlings.

(And the Russians right away said if you want to work for us, we are going to feed you. We say what do you want us to do? Well, you come, we have a hospital here, they right away say there's a hospital, you know, you come and wash clothes.

I don't have to tell you what there was to wash. I mean, it was a terrible thing because there was all blood and terrible, terrible clothes to wash. But we had no choice.

11 And in the evening the soldiers wanted to -- and they gave us a room. We could stay in that room. And they wanted to come to visit us. They wanted to sleep with us.

(And of course we didn't want to do that. And they kept saying you slept with the Germans, you slept with the Germans. You showed the Germans would come back you would sleep with them. You don't want to sleep with us because we are Russian.

So us speaking the language, you know, was, we could communicate. So somehow we always screamed and made a big thing and they went out, because we made such a big scream there.

I mean, they didn't want to rise the whole hospital there.

So next day we talked to the narchonick (phonetic), to the main man, and we said to him that this is going on. And he said you know what, he says, I think that you should go where the civilians are and not among the soldiers, because a soldier's a soldier.

He was pretty nice about it. And he said and we'll take you where civilians are. And there you can also do some work. Of course for them, for the Russians, but not in the hospital itself.

So next day they took us into another village. It was like a farm. And there were other people there, other people that were working. And we worked for them, for the Russians, until we were liberated.

Q DID THE RUSSIAN SOLDIERS RAPE WOMEN TOO?

A Oh, they raped.

What they did was the Germans, what screaming was going on at night. Even in the farm itself where we were, in that farm was protected, okay, because -- he said, the narchonick (phonetic) said if you stay on this

farm and you work for us in the field with the cows and whatnot, you are being protected. The minute you walk out of here we don't guarantee, we don't protect you.

So we were happy to do anything they wanted. We were milking cows and cleaning the, you know, the manure, whatever.

And -- but we were, we heard at night the screaming of these German women. They were raping.

Oh, we were very happy that they were raping them. I don't say we were sorry for them. Absolutely not. Absolutely not. I wish this one can be right.

Q YES, I WAS GOING TO ASK YOU WHETHER THERE WAS RAPE OR OTHER SEXUAL ACTIVITY IN AUSCHWITZ.

A Not in Auschwitz, no. We did not have that.

By that time we heard stories that they, yes, they were, that they used the girls and they send them to the front and whatnot. But no, not by the time we came back.

Q SO YOU DIDN'T HAVE ANY OF THE RAPES.

A No.

Q WHAT ABOUT ANY EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN GIVING BIRTH IN THE CAMP?

A Well, I had an aunt, who was my stepaunt, my mother's brother's wife, and she was pregnant when she came there.

And she was, she had the baby there. They both,

they both went to the gas.

Q BOTH WENT TO THE GAS.

A Both. Both. Yeah. When she, she kept, you know, she carried the child, carried him when he came to birth, and that was it.

Q DID SHE HAVE THE CHILD IN THE BARRACK BY HERSELF?

A She wasn't in my barrack, but I know she had the child and they took her away.

Q BUT I MEAN NO MEDICAL HELP.

A Only what we did among each other. There were some doctors, you know, women doctors.

Q UH-HUH.

A They tried to help you as much as they could, what they could. I mean, without anything.

Q UH-HUH.

A But at least giving you advice. But if something like this happened --

Q AUTOMATICALLY THE MOTHER WITH THE BABY TO THE GAS?

A Automatically. There was no question. No question.

Q I KNOW THAT AFTER YOU HAVEN'T EATEN FOR QUITE A WHILE YOUR MENSTRUATION STOPS.

A Yes. For a whole year we did not have our

period. But I think about in March or April we already had, because we were liberated in February and we started to live a more normal life.

Q UH-HUH.

A But we also had all kinds of boils. All of a sudden things came out on us.

12 My younger sister had such a terrible boil on her arm that, you know, that also scared the Russians away when they saw that you were sick. They did not like sickness.

And my sister, poor thing, that was beaten up like that, she got typhoid. And we were in the same room, five of us in the same room with her with typhoid. And none of us got it.

Q AMAZING.

A And I had, my mouth was infected, my gums. From then on my gums are terrible. And we all had some, something afterwards come out. We weren't well. We weren't well.

Q DID YOU HAVE ANY, DURING THE TIME IN AUSCHWITZ ANY MEDICAL CARE AT ALL?

A Absolutely none. Absolutely none. We couldn't brush our teeth. We were doing it with our fingers.

It's not that we had so much to eat, but whatever

there was. We tried to do it with our hand or a piece of rag. We didn't have soap. We didn't have nothing. We didn't have nothing.

Q NOW, LOOKING BACK, HOW WAS IT THAT YOU WERE ABLE TO COPE WHEN YOU, IN SHORT ORDER IT SEEMED LIKE WHEN YOU GOT TO AUSCHWITZ AND YOU KNEW YOUR PARENTS HAD NEEDED HELP?

A Able to cope with what?

Q WITH THAT KNOWLEDGE.

A I think it's something that you shut off in yourself and you just don't think. You don't think.

To me, even today I don't believe that those people are dead. I used to have dreams that my father's waiting for us at home and he's home and I would go home.

But in the meantime I would dream that I can't get out anymore and I got stuck there again, and that was a terrible dream too.

So yes, dreams, yes, we had a lot, many, many bad dreams. And even today, I'm not quite sure how is it going to be tonight. When I walk a show that deals with it, I have dreams.

Q DO YOU HAVE NIGHTMARES REGULARLY TO THIS DAY?

A No. Not regularly, unless I am --

Q STIMULATED?

A Stimulated to it, yes. But it was for years I did. And when I had my first child I said to myself, what did I do? What do I have a child for? I can't survive with a child. And these were my thoughts for many, many years. My second child was born ten years later.

Q WOW. SO YOU NEVER STOPPED THINKING YOU WOULD HAVE TO SURVIVE?

A Not for many -- that we have to survive. Well, we did in a way survive.

In a way -- listen, we came back, I got married in 1946, I had my child 1947, we left Romania, we left everything in 1948 with a 15-month-old child. Went through the border. Was walking in the winter December. Came to Hungary, where one of my sisters lived. When I walked in she almost died. She couldn't believe it that I, that we made it.

And from Hungary we went to Austria.

But there already the joint was helping us to go through the borders. So the worst part going through the border was between Romania and Hungary. That was the most, I was -- they were, you know, my 15-month-old son son, we had a sled to take him through the field. He had a fur sack, like. He was 15 months old.

We were pulling him, my husband and his brother

and his wife, we were four of us and the child. And another couple that I didn't know very well.

But there was a guy that was taking us to the border, you know. So it was like this. When the guards were meeting, then the guards were meeting on the other point. (Gesturing.)

So between this guy knew how to guide us for money through the border. So we were going through this. And all of a sudden the child wakes up -- oh, we gave him a sleeping suppository so he sleeps through it. All of a sudden he's screaming.

As I go there to look at him, why is he screaming? My God, this child's supposed to sleep, he's so warm, he's so comfortable. Then I notice that sack ripped, you know, in the field. There were all kinds of stalks from summer crops, whatever, and it cut through. And his leg, his little bare leg, was hanging out in the snow.

So of course my husband picked the child up and we stuck him into that. And the child was screaming. I mean, he probably was hurt. My husband and this guide says what did I do? Did I need a small child to take through the border? Did I need this? We're going to get caught and shot.

They were shooting people on the border who crossed the border. And this is mind you after

(liberation already, and this is 1948, December.

And my husband was sticking his tongue into his mouth so he can suck on it. I didn't have a bottle. I didn't have a diaper. I didn't have nothing. I didn't have anything.

So made him kind of quiet down a little bit. Then my brother-in-law picked him and carried him. He was heavy with that sack. You could hardly carry yourself
1 through that snow in the winter at night.
2

And so finally we made it to this Hungarian border and to this house where was the arrangement made that we go in. And of course we went in and the woman gave me some diaper or whatever, and the child fell asleep and he slept.

(They gave us some food. We had some, some money we had so we could, they gave us food in Hungary. We bought food.

And then we had to start out to go to a railroad station. So we go to Budapest. Okay? But this is a village. This is a border village.

(So how do you get to the railroad station? Well, you have to hire this guy, and he's going to take you with the horse and -- not carriage but, again, just a wagon, you know, which is okay, but we were afraid. We didn't go to Auschwitz.

It was so cold, so terribly cold at night. This was already, this was December 28, 29. It was so terribly cold that my sister-in-law's nose froze.

I put that child under that cover that we had there. I don't know how he didn't suffocate. My husband and my brother-in-law got off to walk because they figured if they walk it's better for them than to sit and freeze.

Q BUT WE MIGHT AS WELL, IF YOU DON'T MIND, JUST GO BACK TO WHERE YOU WERE.

A Where were we?

Q YOU WERE IN THIS TERRIBLE NIGHT. YOU HAD GONE THROUGH THE SNOW. YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT YOUR TRIP AND YOUR CHILD.

A Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

So we finally, finally we made it, finally we made it to the railroad station. And my husband got the ticket. He could, you know, buy a ticket, he had money.

And we got on this -- before we got on this train here comes a woman and she looks at me, she's oh, hi, you are a Zisovitz. And I look at her and say oh, my God, this is the one, a Hungarian girl. That's all I need. She identified me. I'm a refugee, I don't have no paper, I come from Romania.

She said where do you come from? What are you

doing here in this village?

And I said to her, do you remember that I got married into Hungary? That was my older sister, not me. I said do you remember I got married and I lived in Hungary? She says yeah, yeah, I remember something.

Oh, so -- I said yeah. We were here for Christmas somewhere -- I don't know what I said -- and we're going home to Kecskemet.

And she bought my story. She didn't know which one I am, if I am Bobbie or Lenci, because we had, we were only 22 months between us really. And we looked at her like maybe yes, maybe no, I don't know. But anyway, she accepted my explanation.

So I just want to tell you that, you know, one surprise and one, you fall from one pit into the other pit, you know. So luckily this we survived. So we went on the train.

Q DID YOU RECOGNIZE HER?

A Yeah. I recognized her.

We got on the train, and we were going towards Budapest.

And then in the meantime my child hadn't, what did he eat. He ate some bread with us, an 18-month-old child -- no, 15 months he was. He was chewing on the bread and didn't have no diapers and the kid needed

diapers. There were no paper diapers at that time.

And I said to my husband, what am I going to do in Budapest with this child? Where am I going, you know. A hotel? What am I going to do there? I said why don't we go to Kecskemet, which is off where my sister lived. And he says good idea.

3 So we had to change train or whatever it was. And we arrived to Kecskemet and we arrived at night. And when I arrived, I mean, my sister really almost died to see me.

First of all, we were five of us with the child and with the child. She had no idea what's happening. And Hungary was still in good shape then. Romania was already very communistic and very bad. You couldn't find this, you didn't have that. But, I mean, we didn't suffer from anything. But Hungary had it much better.

So my sister, of course, she was very happy. We were very happy to walk into a house, to a home.

And my niece was just a year and a half older than my son, so she had diapers, she had the crib, she had everything in the house.

'Til next day we stayed there. And then my husband and my brother-in-law, they went up to Budapest to see how we can go further to the joint.

Q SO YOUR GROUP IS YOU, YOUR HUSBAND, YOUR

CHILD, YOUR BROTHER-IN-LAW --

A Yeah. The five of us. Sister-in-law. Two couples, my husband's brother and his wife, my husband, and I and our child. So the five of us.

So my sister-in-law, I and the child stayed with my sister. And my brother-in-law and my husband went up to Budapest to see to the joint to see how can we get any further. I think my brother-in-law from Kecskemet went with him to see what they can do.

And sure enough they had ways and means to get to Austria. And they told me I should just sit there and they'll call me when the need comes that I have to come up to Budapest.

And sure enough, we were there, I don't think we were there a whole week. Well, after New Year's it happened, yeah. I get a phone call.

Right away I take a taxi -- you know how much a taxi costs -- take a taxi and come to Budapest. We have to get out from Hungary because the law came in, an ordinance came in that if they catch anybody from Romania coming through the border -- this was Romania where we came from -- they ship us back. So of course I got the taxi and the child and my sister-in-law and we went to Budapest.

And that same day we went with a bus. We walked a

little bit from the Hungarian border to the Austrian, but it was not dangerous.

I mean, it was arranged, in a way. It looked like you're doing unofficially something, but it was a little bit, it was official between them.

So we came to, to, to Austria. And they took us into a camp where -- they had, again, the same beds as we had in Austria. And I became hysterical again.

And I said, I came back with my child to Auschwitz? I mean, what is this? But that's how we displaced persons have to go through. And that was Dishtire (phonetic, where the Dishtire (phonetic) horses come from.

But early in the morning the lights went on and some guys came in. And they were selling fresh rose, you know, and making business and whatnot.

Well, anyway, we weren't there very long. We went into Vienna. And in Vienna, again, they put us in the Rostchild house because that's where all the D.P.s came. I can't say it, the situation, it wasn't very good, because it was dirty, it was filthy, it was people did their thing on the hallways.

I mean, it was unbelievable. I don't know why people are the way they are, but --. And these were all Jewish people.

Q INSTEAD OF GOING TO THE TOILET?

A Yeah. Yeah. It was terrible. Me being with a small child, they put me in the so-called hospital room with the child because otherwise you had to sleep in a cot, individual cot.

I don't know how many hundreds and hundreds of people in one room. I mean, there was a big estate, you know, beautiful, big rooms, but used for this. And so they put me in the hospital.

And then we had some people in Vienna that we knew before the war, and we looked them up. And they right away put us in a private home. And I was with the child was in a private home. So it was okay.

And from Vienna they took us -- then they made the arrangement, my husband and my brother-in-law, made the arrangement to go into a D.P. camp.

Now, the D.P. camp was -- again, it used to be an army's barracks. But it was built from bricks, not wood. I mean, you know, we got a big room.

We got a room maybe this big (gesturing) and divided with a wall, my brother-in-law and sister-in-law lived, so we had, was the three of us a little larger and the partition and my brother-in-law the other.

And we waited there to see where we're gonna go. And my husband was liberated by the Americans, so he had

(the right to come to the United States. Anybody that was liberated by the Americans had the right to come to the United States. That was Truman. He was good.

And so my husband gathered the papers, and he went out there to these places where he was liberated and they kind of had some, I don't know how it was.

I never went with him because I had a small child. I had to sit home. And he got proof that he was liberated there. And we got the papers to come to the United States.

(So it took us nine months to be in this D.P. camp. But there were provisions, and the people did some little business here and there, which they shouldn't but they did.

Q HOW DID YOU GET FOOD?

A There were provisions. The Welfare Federation Joint.

Q UH-HUH. THEY FED YOU?

A Yes.

Q ALL YOUR MEALS.

A (Nods head.)

Q DID YOU HAVE ANY ACTIVITIES YOU COULD DO DURING THE DAY? DID PEOPLE WORK?

(A Yeah. People went out to work. My husband worked. He did business. My brother-in-law also did

something. And we women, of course, I didn't. I was with a child.

Q UH-HUH.

A But it wasn't that -- I mean, after all what we went through, this was okay.

Q UH-HUH.

A This was okay.

Q YOU TALK ABOUT DOING CERTAIN BUSINESS. I PRESUME YOU MEAN --

A I'm not supposed to story about it.

Q WELL, THAT'S PART OF THE STORY.

A Okay. You cut it out.

Q YOU DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT?

A Well, no.

(Whereupon tape 1 ended.)

(Whereupon tape 2 commenced.)

Q YOU LEFT AUSCHWITZ, YOU WENT TO --

A This working camp.

Q THE WORK CAMP.

A Uh-huh.

Q THAT WHOLE PERIOD OF YOUR LIFE.

A Uh-huh.

Q AND THEN LIBERATION AND THE POSTWAR, HOW YOU MET YOUR HUSBAND.

A Sure.

Q IT WAS A WHOLE LOT.

A Sure. There is a whole lot.

Q MAYBE IN THE MEANWHILE SOME THINGS WILL OCCUR TO YOU OF THE STUFF YOU ALREADY TALKED ABOUT, AND PLEASE DO SPEAK ABOUT THOSE TOO. ANY DETAILS OR STORIES YOU HAVE.

I WANT THE STATE OF YOUR OTHER RELATIVES TOO.

A Well, there are some that could talk for themselves if they want to be interviewed. I mean, you know, it's very hard. Like I said, when I walked in, nobody wanted to hear us. Okay?

Q YEAH.

A Nobody. And they shut us off so much that we somehow, okay, you don't want to hear us, that's what it is.

But I always talked to my children about it. And my son, I always, when he was a little boy he would scare me because he said when I grow up, I'm going to shoot the Germans, you know.

Q UH-HUH. UH-HUH.

A So I thought well, somehow I have to talk more, you know, more mild about these things, not quite that way so he feels that that's all he wants to do is shoot the Germans.

And I talked to my grandson about it, and he's

very interested.

My granddaughter, she's seven, so she starts, you know, she feels that there is something going on that I talk about it. She quite doesn't understand.

But on the other hand, I'm a little bit afraid to express that this happened to us only because we are Jews. Because I am afraid they are going to say I don't want to be a Jew.

Q UH-HUH. WELL, THERE IS THAT DANGER.

A Yeah. Definitely. And I'm so afraid, because today it's so easy, you know. It's so easy. With us there was no question. I mean, you know, I thought that we wouldn't be.

5 MS. BENDAYAN: ALL RIGHT, RICK. I'M READY IF YOU ARE. DO I HAVE TO WAIT TEN SECONDS?

RICK: WE'VE BEEN RUNNING.

MRS. FARKAS: OH, WE ARE RUNNING.

MR. POSIN: WE ARE RUNNING.

I JUST WANTED TO --

MS. BENDAYAN: We HAVE HERE STEVE POSIN AS A SECOND INTERVIEWER, AND HE HAS SOME QUESTIONS HE WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU.

MRS. FARKAS: Sure.

MR. POSIN: Q WE WERE TALKING ABOUT THE TIME WHEN YOU WERE LIBERATED BY THE RUSSIANS NEAR BRESLAV IN

THE WORK CAMP?

A No. From the work camp we were death marching until a certain place in Stalasia, which is part of Germany where we ran away and then were liberated. Okay.

Q BY THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE.

A By the Russians, yes.

Q WHAT HAPPENED THEN? HOW DID YOU FINALLY GET BACK TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA?

A Okay. So we worked for the Russians, as I told you, we worked for them. And when the war was over they came to the -- you know, they always told us the news what's happening, the Americans are here, the Germans are there. I mean, they talked politics. Why not? They were happy the war is getting to the end.

And May 8 he came and he says the war is over. What? Yeah, the war ended. Now we're all free. There's no more war. How are we going to get back home, you know. That was our first question.

So this Russian said to us -- in the meantime we already befriended some of them. Some of them were nice men. I mean, not everybody was so wild. And they said, you know, a convey is going to Prague tomorrow or after tomorrow, and we are going to -- you want to, we'll give you a lift. And said of course we do.

So we got to get our possessions, which was a few rags, you know, already we had, okay, and then they took us with a truck, a motor truck, and all these girls too that we met already, they're from Czechoslovakia, there were about nine or ten of us, and took us to Prague.

And so we are at to Prague, and of course these girls that were from Prague, they knew exactly where to go and, you know, where to go. Of course we went to the joint, naturally.

No. No.

It's an interesting thing. We went up to the communist party, and we said we are liberated, I mean, we are heftlings liberated and we need a place to live. I don't know why we went there. And they gave us a beautiful apartment. Just a beautiful apartment.

And, I mean, I'm sure that it was checked before and then some Germans lived there and they left and everything, furniture and all that.

And we stayed there for some weeks. And of course we were eating in the kitchen, the joint kitchen. And then we went there very often because we wanted to hear who survived and who come through. And we met people, and they were telling us that this is alive and that I met and this one died and this one this and this one that.

And in the meantime this sister of mine who was the one that was hit, her old boyfriend she met in Prague. He came back with the Czech army from Palestine. He ran away to Palestine in 1930 something. He was one of the smart ones. He went to Palestine.

And when they organized the armies, he joined a Czech army, and he was fighting, he was in Africa, he was, he was in war. He was fighting with the English, under the English for the Czechs.

And he came to liberate Prague. He was one of them. And of course he knew where he has to go and inquire. He went to the joint to see who survived.

I mean, by then people knew what's happening, what happened and what. And there they told him that my sisters, she did not marry him to start out with. She married somebody else. And he was always in love with her. And he went to Palestine at that time. And he never married. And then after they met for her husband, she was told that he died.

I mean, she had some witnesses telling that her husband died somewhere along the way.

And so he was still in love with her. He was helping us a lot. I don't have to tell you. He brought us candy, candy. He made other guys that he was with to buy clothes for us.

One of them brought me a beautiful polka dot dress. My husband fell in love with me when I wore that polka dot dress.

(Laughs.)

And they were really, I mean, we had a, kind of an easy, you know, happy-go-lucky life in Prague for a while.

And then we started thinking well, we have to do something. I mean, we can't live like this. The joint can't feed us forever. I mean, this is going to stop. And, you know, we have to see what we can do for ourselves.

And I went to school. I wanted to continue my schooling. And I wanted to go to a university. And I went up there, and we started talking.

And they asked me where were you born and whatnot. They were willing, you know, they were willing and asked me what school did I go to and where and what.

And when I told them what school I went to and where, he looked at me, he says my God, your accent is so perfect. I would never believe that you are not from this Prague area.

So in the meantime -- I wanted to talk about the accent. They had no problem with talking. I get a telegram from Bratislava, which is another big city, my

(sister Helen was the second oldest sent me a telegram, we are in Brutaslova, this and this address, and my husband Alex is also -- no. And she says we are -- we are here in Brutaslova and this and this is our address, love Helen and Alex.

Well, I was, you know, we were just, couldn't believe that she survived it because she was, not that she was that old, but that she survived. Because usually it was only, I should say, up to 30, 35 the most that survived.

Q HOW OLD WAS SHE?

(A Well, she was 16 years old and nine, so that was, count, count, count, 22, 32 and 6, 38.

Okay. So then I said I have to go and see her. She was my real sister and older sister. And she was always like a mother to me.

And I said to this sister of mine that survived the whole ordeal together, the stepsister of mine, I said I have to go to see her and see what's what. Maybe I come back, maybe I don't, I don't know.

(Well, she, in the meantime they were already in love, I knew she was going to get married to him, so she was kind of taken care of.

(And my younger sister, who was our child, her mother and my father, she wanted to stay with Isabel,

that's the older sister, Isabel.

My niece, she came with me. She just clung to me. I was her everything. I mean, she was like a zombie. All through the whole camp, through the whole thing she was just like a zombie. She didn't care.

I had to give her food. I had to nudge her to do anything. She would have never survived if I wouldn't have been there. I mean, if we wouldn't be there. So she just, oh, I go with you. I mean, wherever you go, I go.

So we went down to Bratislava and met my sister. I was very happy to see her.

She said oh, you're not going to be in Prague, you're not going to stay in Prague, we go home, we go home, we go back, we go home, you know.

Well, it was easy to talk me into that, I mean, to go home, to go home. Let's see, let's see who survived, you know. So then I let my sister know in Prague that I'm not coming back.

And I went back home, and my sister Isabel and her husband she married and my younger sister, they came to the United States about two years before I came. They came straight.

They went through Sweden or somewhere. They came to the United States. And I went back home.

(My sister did not live in the same village. She lived in Romania. At that time it was already Romania. This became Russia, that became Romania. There was no Hungary anymore.

7 And I came to her house. She found her house. And some of the pictures maybe even comes from her. She found some in the loft somewhere. But very little furniture or anything.

(But she found the house. She moved in. I moved in with her. My niece moved in with her. And some Russians lived there too, you know. Every house was occupied with the Russians.

And this Russian, too, he was Jewish. She wasn't, the wife. And he said yidish, I don't know so well, he said kinderlech gates, don't stay here. Go. I said Yosef, why don't you go? You have a chance.

I can't. I have a family at home. My wife is a shishack (phonetic), you know. He said I can't. I have children. I have parents. I can't do it. But you got to get away from here.

I'll never forget how he said kinderlech gates, kinderlech.

(So okay. So I, we stayed in the house, and my brother-in-law started making business. And life wasn't so bad. And then my sister had a baby, the one that

lived in Hungary, the one that we visited afterwards. Her husband came back. Yeah. She was married before, and her husband came back. They both came back. And she lived in Hungary. And she had a baby.

And my sister, this older sister, said to me, Helen, you have to go to your sister and help her out with the baby. That was a custom in our family. The younger always went to the older to help out with the children in a way. Well, okay, I go. You say, so I go. So I went to Hungary, and we had to go through the border. It wasn't exactly easy, but I went there. But my niece stayed.

She found some family from her father's side, and she went there, and they just embraced her and she was a baby there and that was wonderful for her.

Those people were not deported. They were in hiding or something. So anyway, she had a nice life there. So I knew she's okay. So I went --

MS. BENDAYAN: Q It must have been difficult for her to separate for you.

A Well, it was. But we're together still. We're together.

It was just temporary, we figured.

So I went to my sister, and I stayed with her for some months. And that was enough.

And then I came back and what, you know, we had to start life. We have to do something. You can't live on somebody else's goodwill, what they give you.

And coming back home I stopped in Satmarer, Satmarer -- you probably heard of Satmarer Rabi, that's a famous town, my husband is from there -- I stopped there because I had a cousin that lived there. She survived in Budapest. She was hiding. She has a history too. Her husband, last minute she lost her husband before liberation.

Anyway, they were in hiding, and last minute, I mean, just a sharp nail hit him. The Russians were fighting in the street. So I went to visit with her, stayed there for a couple of days, and that's where I met my husband.

Q HOW DID YOU MEET HIM?

A Walking on the street. We were promenading. You know, cortiso. You've heard that word already? It was Saturday afternoon and I was with my cousin and with her mother. And we were walking. And here comes my husband and a couple other guys, I guess.

And he stopped my cousin, because they knew each other. Her husband was a very good friend of my husband's, see, before the war. And he said, you know, my two sisters are getting married and tomorrow is the

married. I'd like you to come to the wedding. He says that to my cousin and to my aunt.

And then my cousin introduced me and says well, this is my cousin, you know, visiting with us. He says you can come too.

That was the end. So anyway, so that's how we met.

Q UH-HUH.

MR. POSIN: Q YOU WERE WEARING THE POLKA DOT DRESS THEN?

A Yes. I was wearing my polka dress with a white collar, yes.

MS. BENDAYAN: Q LET'S JUST STOP FOR NOW.

A Yeah. I think it's enough. I think it's enough. It's dark. I don't like to drive in the dark. I didn't even realize it's that dark.

(Whereupon, the taped interview of Lenci Farkas concluded.)

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