Interview with JULIA FIELD
Holocaust Oral History Project
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Transcriber: Patricia Fink

Q: Julia, why don't you say your name.

A: Yes. My name is Julia Field and I live in The City.

Q: Can you say when and where you were born?

A: I don't tell my age (laughter). I was born in Hungary.

Q: Why don't you start telling us things you remembered after the interview you gave already.

A: First of all, I want to say that my comments on certain things that happened in Auschwitz are nothing of hindsight; it's the way I felt, reacted and my thoughts are the way how I felt them at the time. I added nothing, only the way how I felt when I was there.

Q: Were there any memories that came to mind after the interview?

A: Yes, yes. One memory, I want to go back to the day when we were taken away from our home, when the four Germans who lived in our home at the time came out, and they heard what happened. My mother was there, my brother and my little sister. And one of the Germans who stayed there in my mother's house during the Passover week, and my mother fed them and they lived there, he went to my mother and put his hand on her shoulder and he kind of apologized that, "It is not we are doing this, but your government." I mentioned this before, but I never forget that.

He went to my little sister and put his hand on her and said, "Du gehst, kleine [Maedchen], du gehst." And since

that, so many times I think about it. Why didn't he say where she was going? Maybe we wouldn't have gone. He knew.

And also, another one which I didn't tell about, it is the last days of Auschwitz. We were in no-man's land. The SS left already and the Russians didn't come, and we didn't know what would happen to us. We knew that the Germans could come back before and take us. But anyway, it was terrible, the waiting, the waiting. But we were going out already; not out of the camp, but the sections, the different sections, because the electricity went out of the wire. And the men in the next section cut through the wire and people went back and forth. And it was quite lively; people talked, they exchanged thoughts and everything.

Then one afternoon somebody came in and said Germans came into the camp. And we waited what will happen. And two Germans came through from the men's section, which the barracks were closed; only the wire was between us just a few feet away on both sides, the women's section and the men's section. And we were sitting there, or standing there, not knowing what's coming, and then two Germans soldiers in uniform of -- not the SS, but regular soldier uniforms.

As they came in they had a long gun in their hands and they put the end of the gun here, you know, when you would target the gun, and it was sticking out this long in the barrack. And they went ahead and walked back and forth, walked back and forth, and they left at the front door. And then those people watched them, where they went, and they came and they said,

"They left." But what happened, actually, was that they came first into the men's section and they heard some shotgun. What happened, a man got hold of some gun and was -- a prisoner, and was shooting at the birds, probably for a dinner or something. And these Germans just came into the section and they heard it. So they lined up, I don't know how many of the men, and shot them right there.

But what was interesting, and I also want to include, there was this pretty barrack girl in our barrack, and when the fence went down -- during the years through the fence she had a friendship going with a man on the other side of the fence. And when the electricity went out of the fence they met in closer range. And nighttime the man came over and you could hear the sounds of love, because they were happy to see each other after a long time.

So, but what happened, the man, her friend, was also shot by the Germans. And that night the poor girl, instead of being happy, she was laying on the bed all night and sobbing. Her friend was among those who these Germans shot. This was another something which I recall, because we felt so terribly sorry for her.

Q: Could you tell us how people kept count or kept track of the days?

A: Just in your mind. I don't know why. I didn't have a calendar and I didn't know the days, but we all knew when it came up. I don't know how we heard that from people who maybe had a calendar, but we knew when the dates came up.

Q: What did you do for holidays, the holidays you wanted to remember?

A: Once I remember we are coming home from work on the eve of Rosh Hashanah. You know, they brought into Auschwitz people just for the purpose of killing them. Every day those in another camp, they selected out the ones who were not good enough for work anymore, and they brought them in and they gassed them.

And so Rosh Hashanah evening we came home from work and we saw through the gate a few trucks coming in and people were standing in the open trucks. We saw right away who they were; they were just brought in for gassing. And it happened that probably as we marched -- you know, we were mainly Hungarians in that group -- probably they heard that we were Hungarians. And one man waved to us and said, "God bless you, my children." We didn't know if they knew, but we knew where they were going.

We worked right there every day. We passed four crematoriums and we knew what was going on there. I hope they didn't know before, but they must have, because if they brought them to Auschwitz it was already because they had selected them out. Probably they knew. I still hear him saying that.

The young people -- this is still a little bit hard to explain.

In the morning we had nothing, but once a day we had some soup, which had practically nothing in it. If somebody found a piece of potato, that was a big deal. So that was our

main meal of the day, a little piece of bread and maybe a little marmalade of some kind, when we went back to the home barrack was handed out to us. And when Yom Kippur came, probably the girls who worked, or the people who worked in the kitchen, they managed -- because they brought the big pots with this soup into our work place every day from the kitchen, which was far away. And I don't have to tell you how we felt on the eve of Yom Kippur. I just know that the next day we worked, but they didn't bring the soup. So somehow they managed not to feed us on Yom Kippur day, but when we went home and we were already on our cots, they served the soup. So we didn't eat Yom Kippur day. They must have done somehow; I don't know. I don't think it was with the knowledge of the Germans. I don't know. Maybe some of the lower Germans, the guards or something, they knew about it. I don't know. But we had really a nice Yom Kippur. Although every day was a Yom Kippur, but I tell you, I always fasted since I was 13 years old. But it was never so easy as in Auschwitz, because you were hungry all the time, so you didn't feel it that way.

I told before about [Irene], with whom we were in our last days in Auschwitz, who died there. I mentioned before, so I don't know whether I repeat myself or not. But she was a sweet woman. She was from a very wealthy family as a girl from Czechoslovakia, and she married a very wealthy man in Belgium and they lived in Brussels.

And I mentioned before that when she was dying, she asked me to remember her mother-in-law the day that she died in Auschwitz. I still remember it. It was December 6th. And

her husband she didn't know about. And she felt that she will die, so she asked me that if I survived -- somehow she was sure I will. She asked me that -- she had a 16-year-old daughter in hiding in Brussels -- that when she dies and I survived and I go home, I would tell her daughter, who she was sure will survive, the date of her grandmother's death and that she doesn't know about her father, and the date, when it comes, of her death. So she died exactly a day after the liberation and I was sitting there next to her.

So when I came back -- I told this before. But when I came back, and of course, it was a time when we didn't think too much about many things. But I told about after the war was over, that I have to write a letter to the girl. By the way, when I asked Irene about the address, she said, "You don't need it. Her name is Helga [Karneal] and that is enough." Could you imagine that in Brussels, which has millions of people, and they were so well known that she was sure it was enough?

And another thing about Irene, she was so highly intelligent. What happened was it was her last days -- we didn't know that -- and she needed a bedpan all the time. She couldn't do nothing, but she needed it. So I scrounged the bedpan and gave it to her.

There was a little Jewish doctor, a woman, but she couldn't do nothing. She had no medication, nothing. But poor Irene, in her last days, she asked me often, "Go and call the doctor." So I went and I called her. She came to work and she

comforted her, but she couldn't give her medication, nothing. So in fact, people around there told me, "Don't try; she can't do nothing." Anyway, once again she asked me and I went, and she expected the doctor to come.

A girl, who just found a little scissor which we didn't have before, she found it somewhere, at some barrack, and she was sitting on the edge of her bed cutting her toenails. And Irene was sitting there and she said to her "Please stop doing that when the doctor comes." It was in bad taste to cut somebody's toes in the presence of somebody, and she was very aware of that.

These were little things, you see, but I recall about her because it was so painful. She was 35 years old, 36, I think, and it was especially bad for her because we got liberated and she died a day after.

But anyway, I wrote to the girl -- I was in the DP camp already, and finally I made myself write to her. And as she said, I just said, you know, I wrote down and I said when she died. And she wrote a letter to me. And of course, it was maybe in '47, that was two years after the war. And she thanked me and she said it was a very painful thing to hear, opened the wounds again. And she then asked me, "How come you are in the DP camp? The war is over. What are you doing in the DP camp, if I could be any help." So I thanked her. I wrote back. I wrote back and I said, "I'm sorry that I opened the wounds, but we owe as much for those whom we loved so much." And I wrote that, "Thank you, I don't need anything because my father is in the United States and I am going there shortly and I have

everything, but I just wanted you to know that I did what she asked me to."

Q: I want to ask you to talk about the relationship between people in the camp, if there developed any friendships. Also, if you could speak a little about people who came from different countries, what did that mean, if you could express any difference.

A: See, we were the latecomers, from Hungary, because as I told you before, Hungary was an early ally of Hitler. Hungary made a pact with Hitler to fight at his side when there would be a war. And Hungary took all the examples about Jewish laws and they made Jewish laws in Hungary.

And then when the Germans came in finally -- we knew already the Germans were due, the whole world knew -- that was March of 1944. We knew that it was just a matter of time and then it will end. And it was the tragedy, really, of the Hungarian Jews, because they did such a good job with us. They took almost everybody; some people from Budapest, but from the rest of the country, I don't know exactly how many hundred thousand.

So when we went there we were new. The Polish girls -- I am talking about the girls because we lived with the girls -- and the Slovakian girls, they were the first in Auschwitz. In fact, they built Auschwitz. And the first winter they told us they died like bugs. They were building the crematoriums and all the buildings there.

So anyway, when we got there these girls were already

very, very hardened. It's normal. They had not too much sympathy for us who were late. So there were a few things, you know, which they told us maybe, but we understood that they just had too much. They just had too much.

Okay. Our immediate little group were those who came together from our town. We were together three women; one I mentioned that she was very helpful to me. She was 40 years old. She lost two children and her husband and was very resourceful, and she helped me a lot with my work, and others. And of course, I helped her; we helped each other. We were very close. But mainly, this was the situation: You had a few people with whom you were like a family. If you lost one, then it was a loss like a family, because then you had nobody. So this is only what I could say. There was a few people who were together, and I'm sure it was that way with others.

Q: Would it be possible for you to repeat a story about your last memories of your mother and your sister?

A: To repeat?

Q: Yeah, the way you got to camp and your last memories of the last few days with your family.

A: I will, because I think that I'll just run over this section, which is the most painful for me, because this was when we were together the last time.

So when the Germans came into our town and Passover was over, they took us into the center of the district, a bigger city, and they put us up. The city had a very beautiful temple

and it was emptied and they put us up there, and we made beds for ourselves on the floor. We were allowed to bring only, I think, maybe not even 30 pounds of food or whatever things by a person. And so this was the first night for us, full with people, people were coming from all directions. They brought them just like us and we arrived at the same time.

And we didn't have much food, because the four Germans who my mother supplied for Passover, the food supply, everything was gone. And you know, at the time food was very scarce anyway. Mother managed some food for Passover, a chicken or something, which I didn't even see. I wasn't home.

So there were relatives who we met from all over and some of them had more food than we, so they gave us some. And the Jewish population of the city that's still free, you know, where they took us -- the name was [Bartoszyce]. It's hard to pronounce; that's why I don't insist. And they supplied some food, which we cooked there outside, and I remember I had to distribute the plates.

So we were there for a few days and then one morning they said to get ourselves together. And we went through the city streets in groups, and they said they'd take us to the brick factory. We had no idea what is a brick factory; I didn't even know the city had a brick factory.

So we went and the population was standing at the sides watching us and I felt, not embarrassment, embarrasement and anger at the way how we went. All of us like -- I just remember that I felt terrible.

So we arrived to the brick factory and the brick factory were long, long barracks which the upper half there was no wall, just halfway was a wall, because they used these to dry the bricks. That was the purpose of these barracks. They made the bricks and they stored them in there, so one-half or even more were open. So that was our new home. There were sections, you know, and I don't remember if there was any straw on the floor or a dirt floor. So families bedded down together and we tried to put -- evening came. It was May, but the nights were cold -- no, it was April. The nights were cold and we tried to put over some rags in the opening to make it a little bit more warm.

And so we were there until the 20th of May. And the situation was very bad. There were no facilities to relieve yourself. They dug up some holes and this is where we went. And the barracks filled up and we were about ten thousand people there at the time already, until they started to take us on May the 20th.

And there is a memory, again, of my little sister. I know there is no difference; I loved her as I love my children, and I have a great love for my children. Both my brother and my sister were younger than I. I was the oldest child. And because my father was away, my mother and I -- I was the one my mother -- you know, we considered them the children. I was young, too, but I was older.

And so anyway, as I said, the barracks were full and people went to see each other. You know, people came who we

knew, relatives and friends. And I remember one afternoon my little sister -- she was 12 years old -- she went off to play with somebody and she didn't come back at the time when I thought she should. And I was so worried. I was out of my mind. I went all around the barracks to look for her, and finally when she came, I remember, I loved her, but I yelled out of -- because of how I felt. I said, "Why did you stay so long?"

And so they started to take transports away. One morning we heard that -- I don't know how many barracks, the people from a number of barracks has to go. There was a side line where the train was coming. It was not far; we walked there.

So the people in these barracks went to the train, but the rest of us were cordoned off. We couldn't go and see or mix together. We just knew they were taken away. And after they were taken away, when they took off the cordon, we went around there. It was a primitive train station which they used to transport the brick. It was the setup; they made brick, they dried it, and they shipped it.

So what was strange, I remember, they were laying things next to the train, clothing and this and that, and we didn't know why; they threw it away or something. So we find out that they were allowed to take just a very little, what they wear, so the rest of it, they throw it down.

And in the meantime -- I don't know if I told this. Shall I say it again -- yes?

Q: Yes.

A: They took hostages. When they came in, the Germans

in this big city, not in our town, but this city where we eventually came, they took hostages. The Jews in the city had to pay, I don't know how many millions in our money at the time, because if not, the hostages will be killed. So people were running with the money and they got the money together. In fact -- this is a nice note. I heard that the gentile cleaning women ran and contributed some money to this. And this was before we were taken to this city.

But anyway, one morning we heard voices from both ends of the barracks and they said that everybody who had any valuables, money or jewelry, should bring it out to the front of the barrack, there is some container, and drop it in. So when we came away they took everything away from us before we came, the same day they took us from our home. But there were some people who managed to sew it into something. Some people even baked it into some cookies, some jewelry or something.

So first, nobody wanted to take. We had nothing to take. In fact, my mother had a few pieces of money, very little, and thinking that was her last money she wanted to hide it under a brick -- between two bricks. And she lifted it up and I yelled at her. I said, "Mother, you want to risk yourself for it?" But she said, "My child, tomorrow is another day. I have to get some bread somehow." I said, "No, Mother, we will do without the bread." So we took it out and she took it and dumped it. It was very little, as I said. It was already after when they take everything.

So everybody took all day. From every barrack they went and dropped in what they have. And this was -- well, anyway, then the day came when it was our turn to go to the train. But while we were in the brick factory there were rumors going after they started to take the transports, the rest of us: "Where are they going? Where are they taking them?" So the rumor was because the Hungarian men were away on the Russian front, there were not enough workers in the southern part of the country, and harvest time was coming, so they will take us and we would do the agricultural work there. So this was a good sign because we needed to do anything, why not? -- just to save our lives until something happened. But we had no idea where they were taken and where we were going. Absolutely; only these rumors.

Shall I go back a little bit?

It was after when Germany went into war and they went to the eastern front and there were some soldiers and also Jewish young men who were taken to forced labor camps instead of being soldiers, because they didn't trust them, and they put them out to the Russian front. So some of these people came home -- not the Jews, but the gentile soldiers came back for a furlough. And they dropped a word here and there in 1942, 1943, what was going on on the Russian front. And I remember my mother went up to Budapest to take care of something and she was in a friend's house, and they were talking. And they said somebody just came back, told terrible

stories what's going on with the Jews in the eastern part, you know, in Russia and Poland, and they said -- my mother came back and told this story for us, not for children, but for the friends and neighbors, or course, saying, "I can't believe it."

So these soldiers said what they do to the Jews is this: They get them together, they take them out to the woods, they let them dig a big grave, and then they order them to stand there at the edge of this grave and shoot them into it, one after the other. They they throw lime on it. And then there was another. And I remember we are sitting there, you know, it was still a warm room, we had our tea, and we talked about this. And who could believe it? Who could believe it?

But anyway, I remember, because I'll tell you, I read newspapers all the time, but the Hungarian papers, they never wrote the truth, you know. You just had to figure out for yourself what was the truth or what not. But I was a very, very informed young girl. I was interested in what was going on in the world.

And I remember that when our turn came to go to the train and we talked about many, many things, where we go -- and I remember this, too. I remember that they stand up, they dug their own graves.

So then we marched to the train with all our friends, mainly from our town. It was afternoon and it was a warm day. And we all were lined up and there were Hungarian policemen

and German soldiers, officers, standing there. And we had to line up and the Hungarian soldiers went over all bodies, looking for whatever. And I say this: They ordered us to put our legs apart and some of them then -- fortunately, not me, but some of them went up and looked for valuables in certain places.

But anyway, I was standing there with my mother and my sister and brother. And when my turn came and the soldier started to touch me, my mother must have felt terrible, because she said, "This is a young girl whom men have never touched before," you know, meaning me.

So we went through this. I mentioned this before, what was strange to me. We had our little things with us, what they allowed us to take with us to the train, and the Hungarians wanted to take away from us these things. And the Germans were lenient. They said, you know, "Take it. Take it." And we decided there that, "Lookit. The Germans are better to us than the Hungarians." Of course, later, in Auschwitz I find out why they were. They wanted us to take more there and not to leave it. The Hungarians wanted us to leave it here and the Germans wanted us to take it there. So this was the kindness, you see?

So it is late afternoon when finally we boarded the cattle car. And I didn't know this, and it was a terrible feeling. I still remember when we were there already and we heard that we were locked in. We heard from the outside

they locked us in. Then I realized where we were, that the train was our prison and there was no way out. They had just little holes with wire around the top and we were so many of us -- later they counted us; we were 98 -- we had no place to lay down at all. So my girlfriend and her family and my family, we made a place for them against the wall to make them comfortable. We had some clothes and we put them down for them to sit on it. My mother and little sister sat next to each other and my brother and I, we wind up in the middle. We were like crowded herrings there sitting. And as much as I would like, I really can't say how painful it was.

The train finally started to go and we had hope. We had hope -- this is human nature -- that we will go to the south and we will work on the land. So evening came and the night came and all is asleep or whatever. I can remember I just sat next to my brother, holding onto each other, and my friends. And the next morning we were stopped in the very well known big city of Hungary, they call it [Kosice]. That belonged to the Czechs before, but during the war the Hungarians got it back from the Czechs.

Anyway, some German soldiers came to the door. They opened the cars and they counted. And I still remember, he was a German who spoke Hungarian, the [tshraub] kind. I don't know if you've heard of them. They lived in Hungary during history, Germans, and they spoke Hungarian and they spoke German.

Anyway, one German counted us and exactly like this: "98 Jew." At that time I was still a little bit sentitive, you know, and I said, "That's all; not person, nothing. '98 Jew.'"

Anyway, what they did, they brought some water -- not the Germans; I don't know who did it. We had some container, only one, with water, and they filled it up. And I remember a woman, a peasant woman in the outside of the city when the train stopped, and from the side, from a little cottage, a woman was running with a container of water and she gave it up to us through the window. A peasant woman. And she run back and forth until the train left. God bless her. She wasn't a Jewish woman. She was a poor, gentile peasant woman. So these things do happen sometimes.

So then we went and then another night came, and when we woke up we knew that we left Hungary already. We looked out of the window and it wasn't the southern part of Hungary, but it was Czechoslovakia up to the north, and then pretty soon we were in Poland. And then to me the story what happened to the Jews who dug their own graves came. And now I lost any hope. I didn't discuss this with my family or with friends. I don't know what they thought. But we knew that Poland wasn't good. We knew that it wasn't good.

It was a beautiful day, I remember. It was May. And we looked out, stretched up to the little holes, and there was the countryside with the flowers and everything. And we

were inside and hardly any water, and the smell, because we had to take care of our needs right there -- anyway, it was getting worse and worse. And we started. And it was a Friday afternoon when we stopped in Krakow about sundown. We stopped at Krakow and I was thinking about Friday evenings at home, and here we were, locked in and in Poland.

But I want to say that during this trip we heard often shotguns, the sound of guns. And at one point we heard a woman scream. We couldn't look outside. I can't say what went on because I didn't see it. I just know that one girl in our car got so hysterical that we had to calm her down somehow. And I just know that more and more in my mind was that at one point they'll stop the train, they'll just say, "Her aus," and somewhere at the side we will dig our own graves. That was what went on in my mind. And then we heard shooting. I remember that I covered my little sister's face and eyes -- I was afraid somebody would shoot through -- so her eyes wouldn't be hurt. It's hard to tell you what went on in our minds.

So after Krakow we started again. And we went for a while and then we stopped and it was dark already. And I remember that my mother went to the window and in German she asked for water, and she said, "We are thirsty; we need water." And from somewhere way back we heard somebody say, "We are too far from home to station. We can't give you water."

And we stopped one night and the train was standing. We didn't know where we were. And then in the morning we

heard that the car doors were opening one by one, and finally our opened and we heard, "Her aus, her aus, her aus." And we went out and we saw already other people lined up ahead of us. And we were told to leave our luggage next to the train. And I saw laying there a huge load of luggage, all kinds. In fact, I remember I was standing next to a very elegant suitcase and there was a tag on it, "Holand, Antwerp," or something, and the name of whoever. And I looked and I said, "It seems that we are not alone. People from Holland are here, too, just arrived."

So we were lining up and I remember my mother said, "Oh, my," and she run to her luggage which she left there, and took out my father's picture which he sent from the United States. And she wore a brown coat and sheput the photograph of my father into her pocket.

And there were men in striped uniforms helping us get out of the car and making order while we were waiting. And I remember this again: There was a woman standing next to us from [Aufda]. And she went aside to one of the stripe-uniformed men and she said -- I think she talked Jewish, but I don't know -- she said, "What will happen to us here?" And then she came back and said, "When I asked what will happen to us here, he said, 'If you live this day through, you will live forever.'" Isn't that something that I remember this?

And then it was strange. My mother and me looked at each other and said it was no good omen, because you were

afraid it would end on this day, but we didn't know why, of course. We'd never heard of Auschwitz; we'd never heard of gassing. We heard about the graves, but we never....

So finally, our line -- we had five in a row. There was my mother -- oh, I forgot something. When we got out of the car there was the order of men lined up separate and women separate. And my brother run off and my mother said, "Nikolas left and he didn't even kiss me." I looked at my mother and I said, "Why should he kiss you? He'll be back. We just have to line up." You see how the mind works? One way we knew that things are bad; the other way I was sure he is coming back to us, you know, he just lined up there and then he comes back. So he was somewhere. We couldn't see him anymore. He was in the line with the men, but we didn't see him.

So my sister, my mother and I and my good friend and her mother, we were in one line. And then they told us, when this man said, "If you live this day through, you will live forever," I went to my mother and I started to fix her hair up. And my mother looked at me and said, "My child, even here you want me to be pretty." And I don't know why I did this. I really have no idea. The only thing I heard, they asked everybody how old they were. My mother was 52. And so the idea that age had something to do with something made me feel that maybe how we looked had. Don't ask me why.

In the meantime, I was so worn out -- I was a very slim girl, half like I am when I was a girl. And these days

did a lot of damage to me. I know I felt weak and I felt very bad, and I didn't look at myself, but I imagined how I looked.

So there was standing in front a very elegant looking German soldier, officer, and some other people there. And also, when they opened the door I remember the German who came near to the door, he had a hat on and I saw the death's-head. It was a symbol of the SS, the death's-head. When I saw this, then I said to myself, "My God, he's the SS," who we heard something, you know, that they were some kind of [inaudible].

So we didn't know who the officer was there, but I remember he asked me in German, "Du bis krank?", which means "Are you sick?" I wasn't. I was a healthy person always. So I said, "No, ich bin nicht krank." And then he asked how old I was, which I told him -- no. He asked this first and then he asked me if I am sick. And you know, like a [inaudible] I sounded like a [inaudible], I said, "No, ich bin nicht sick." And it angered him, evidently, because he kicked me. With his beautiful, shiny boots he kicked me right here (indicating). But he kicked me to the rest [inaudible] to that side. And I went there and I told myself how terrible my mother must feel, seeing me kicked by this officer. And so I made up my mind when I see her I will tell her that -- exactly this is how I remember I told myself -- that that's all that should happen to us in Hitler's country, if I should see her again, which, of course, I never did.

So I watched them from a distance. She talked a little bit longer. I don't know what she was telling that German, who turned out to be Mengele. And I saw them following to the left of that other group, the mother of my friend and a young woman of 28 with a little girl, whom we all loved, and they went. And of course, we have no idea that we will see each other. So anyway, I remember looking after them after they disappeared in a curve of the road. My mother had the brown coat on and my little sister had a little beige or something. That was the last time I saw them. (Pauses.)

You want me to go on? I mean, you tell me, because --

Q: Go ahead, yeah. Well, we could recount the story how you entered the camp.

A: So we were standing there and I also noticed a few things while we are standing there. One was that the twins, they asked who were twins. And those who were twins, they told them to stand in a different -- in the middle of the two. I remember two young girls were standing there. And also, I saw a truck with old people, with people among us, also, from our car, old people and lame people, being helped into the truck by the striped-uniform people, gentle. And I looked and I said, "This is not a bad place, for heaven's sake. They helped these helpless people into a truck instead of walking somehwere." So they get there and in maybe half an hour they were dead. Of course, we didn't know that.

So when the selection was over they said to march,

and we marched. And we went a long way and then there were barracks everywhere and we saw these huge fences, and we turned again and turned again and we were told that was the building and that was the bath. And we went into the bath and there was a big lobby and they had these Slovak and Polish girls were there already. They were the personnel who did the work there. And so they told us to take off everything, all our clothes, and just those who wore glasses to leave the glasses on, and our shoes, keep our shoes.

And this also reminds me of something. I had a few very fancy pairs of shoes, you know, how a young girl would. At that time they used cork, because they didn't have leather, so they made these very fancy shoes with high cork heels. And it was very stylish. So, I don't know, I got hold of two pairs, I remember a navy blue and something else. But I took with me a gray high shoe, gray leather high shoe. And before we went out of the car I was thinking, you know, which shoe, because we had to leave everything, and which shoe I should take with me. Of course, I forget the fancy one and I looked at the ground outside and I said, "No, this is not a place for fancy cork-heeled shoes." So I took my high-heeled gray leather shoes, and that's what saved my life during the summer, because the only thing they let us keep was the shoes. And that cork shoe, I mean, I couldn't even walk one step in it. But this was a very comfortable, hand-made shoe, so I kept it.

Anyway, we went into the bath, the showers, and we left our clothes, but we left our shoes nearby somewhere. And when we came out there was lots of girls, and naked, and in the middle there were two German sholdiers, just socializing with each other. Anyway, I don't know what -- they didn't do nothing. I mean, don't misunderstand. They are just there. They had a right to be there among a group of naked Jewish girls.

So then we came one by one. A girl had a haircutting machine, so she was cutting down our hair, we were bald, and our hair from everywhere, and it was quite painful at certain places. So we came out without hair. But as I say, we always thought, "Okay. I mean, no hair; so what? It would grow out."

And we are standing there, standing there, and it was very late, and finally they told us to march. So again, after a long walk we went to a section which it turned out was called Section A. And it is funny, because the barrack number was 13. I don't believe in this business, but you know, it's a funny thing. Section A and our barrack was 13. I know it has nothign to do with nothing, but at that time I said, "Oh, Barrack 13; so what?" You know, 13 is supposed to be lucky -- or not lucky.

So we stood there while what they called [zahlen], which means counting, and in the barrack we were at least a thousand young girls. And there was a Slovakian girl who

said she would be our barrack leader, and she had a crew who cleaned and did things in the barrack. And she made a speech and she said, "I don't think you know where you are, but the name of the place is Auschwitz, Birkenau." So we knew that we were where we were.

And they gave us a little piece of bread and we went into the barracks. And there are these three tiers of cots there, which had just a wooden platform with nothing, no pillow, no blanket, nothing, just as it is. So it turned out we went with our people, I don't know, we were six or seven from our town and around. And it was already sleeping time and the day was so long and we were so tired, and there was no place to lay down, so we sat. You know, we sat next to each other. I think they brought something, I don't know what it was, for tea, and it was one dish and we handed it around. I drank and I gave it to somebody. Only one dish, whatever, it was enough.

So we sat and we decided that half the time half the number will sleep and the other half will sit, so this is what we did. After a while those of us who sat lay down so we could have some sleep. And this was a Saturday morning. Saturday. It was a Sabbath day. And then was Sunday. And we didn't know nothing about nothing, and we are talking and we are glad to get out of the cattle car and see the sun again, and we are sure that we will see -- you know, we asked where we could see our family. They didn't say nothing when we could see our family, but we don't mind. It was natural that

maybe children and other people are in different camps. Maybe they will do some work there, cooking or sewing or something for the rest of us, and we will do something else.

So I think it was Monday morning when we were sitting on our beds and I remember a young man came in who found out that his family was just brought in. And the young man was there already for a long time. And the girl was sleeping, I mean, next to our bed. And we saw the young man standing there and talking to her, and we were glad that somebody found somebody there.

And it was noisy, a thousand young women in a barrack, so everybody talked and whatever. And then we hear a voice, which was our barrack leader's voice, "Quiet, quiet, quiet." We quieted down a little bit, then we started to talk again. And so the noise was bad and she said again, "Quiet, quiet." And then she said, "You are living up here. You are making noises while your mother is just going through the chimney." She was effective. It was quiet, everybody stopped. "What she means, through the chimney?" And then we came in and we saw, actually, I remember, the flames. One of the brick buildings which we were standing nearby, I figured it out for myself it must be a community bakery. What a kitchen, you know? -- and a huge, huge flame. And so then I recalled those huge flames and the chimney, and she said again, "Yes, your mother is going out through the chimney." And everybody kept quiet. And then I remembered the sister and her brother.

The sister says, "What's she talking about?" He says, "Oh, nothing." And then I watched the face of this young man telling his sister, and I saw on his face that something wasn't right, because he didn't say, "Okay, little sister, she's a bad person, she just scares you, it's not true." No, he didn't say nothing. He didn't say that it wasn't so.

And then somebody asked another barrack girl and then she said that, "Those who arrived here with you are are not with you, they were put into the gas and then they were burned. That's what she's talking about."

I remember sitting there and my friends were sitting there, and I also remember when I was in the car I was looking at the people in the car. Among the 98 of us there was six or seven only whom you could consider who could work. And I was thinking -- at that time we were supposed to go somewhere to work, the fields or whatever. And I said, "How these people will work?" But it didn't occur to me, anything, I mean, that the selection was something. But I was sitting there and the girls, and we were quiet, and we walked through the barracks. And I remember in my mind seeing my mother and sister as they turned at the corner, and I believed it. I believed it. Hitler didn't bring us here to waste anything on us.

And then the girls asked me, "Julie, you don't believe it, do you, that people kill people and they burn people?" I said, "I do." So that was for me the moment of realization that it was true, it was possible. And this whole -- (interruption).

Later, somebody told me that they saw my brother marching with the -- he was a strong boy. He was 16 years old and he was a strong boy. So they said that they saw him marching with those who were selected for work. But I never saw him there, but I hoped that he was taken somewhere for work. But I know that my mother and sister what happened, and that was for me -- I really became like a living death. You know, when a thought takes hold in your mind, only one, it goes around and around all the time, the same, you see the same thing, that is a bad thing.

So anyway, after two weeks they -- really, I repeat myself, I feel, because I told these things already. You want me to say?

Q: Yes.

A: You want; okay.

So, just one day out of our life there. It was June already. We went from May 20th, so it was the beginning of June. And in the morning they chased us out of the barrack and the sun was -- it was cold first, very cold, and then the sun came out and it was very hot. By the way, they gave us, instead of our clothes that they took away, they gave us a gray, linen dress, one panty, and I think one slip; I don't know. And this gray uniform -- we all had this gray uniform.

And so they chased us out. We were between the barracks. And right there the barrack girls were cleaning inside. First they gave us some bitter tea, but then they

didn't give us water. Already in the car we were without water and then we hoped we would get some water, but we didn't. And we were standing there on the hard ground and the sun coming down on us, on our shaven heads, and begging for water, and they said, "No." And they said for an excuse that if we drink water it will cause some sickness in our stomach, diarrhea or something, I don't know, and that was the reason why they didn't give us water. But anyway, there was no water. We suffered terrible.

And after a while, one by one, we hit the ground; we fainted away. We shook each other to awaken us. I fainted away so much, I remember. And what is interesting, you hit yourself and your head on the ground, and when you come back you have no pain. I still don't know how. We had no pain; just came back. And I don't remember if they gave us food or not -- yeah, they brought in the middle of the day this wooden container, and it had some food in it. And it smelled so terrible that instead of taking the food we went as far as we could from the container.

And what we watched, they got other older prisoners, Ukranians, Russians -- no, Polish, I don't know about Ukranians. There were all sorts. Anyway, they went to the container and they got out the food and ate, and they couldn't take much of it. So we didn't eat because we couldn't eat. It was terrible for us at the beginning. We couldn't eat. So they ate our food, which we were glad, and we couldn't.

So then it was so bad without water that I remember a woman who was there with her daughter, went into the barrack, and it was a brick floor. And there was this, you know, bucket which they wash the floor, and the woman lay down and begged to drink the water from that bucket which they washed the floor with. Of course, they didn't let her.

And it was about after two weeks they chased us out of the barrack and there was some German woman, and you know, there were German SS women, too. You know that, don't you?

So the kapos, and I don't know who, they counted us and counted us and counted us, and they hit the line and at one point they said, "March." And so we marched to a little cabin or something, and there was a girl in front with a table and some blue stuff and some pen, and she gave us the number, tattooed the number. You want me to tell you mine?

Q: Uh-huh.

A: A6063.

And they told us that we will work, and the barrack leader said, "How lucky you are, because those who work in Auschwitz have hope to survive." And not only that, we were also lucky, she told us, because our work will be in the barracks, a section of Birkenau Auschwitz which they called [Breshykov], and these barracks that they bring the things from the train, you know, what we left there, they put it on trucks and they fill up the barracks with everything. And we could find probably

food, too, which they bring in, and we could eat something there. So it was considered a very good thing.

So next day we went and as we marched toward the gate there was a stand and there was a girls' music band. They had white shirts, navy blue skirts, and all of them played some instrument. And we marched for the rhythm of the band. And we had to go left -- links and right -- I forget all of it. Links was the left. Right and left, right and left, just like we were soldiers.

And so we went, and this first day we realized some of the road we thought was the same we went on the first day when we went to the bathhouse when we arried. We even noticed the bathhouse and right there there was a road and there were these barracks. And evidently, they didn't have enough barracks to store the things, because they made up, out of heavy blankets and all kinds of things, a tent which the Germans called "circus." And it happened that we were cut down, I don't know how many of us, for that barrack. So we worked in the circus.

And the rest of the barracks they later that day selected, let's say bedding, they were in one barrack; then other things. In our barrack was everything all together, so we had to select everything, the shoes to shoes, jewelry to jewelry separately, and this is what we did. And so this was our job. And we found some food in it, but I remember I just couldn't eat nothing.

I'll tell you what went on in my mind. I saw my mother and sister and the rest of them arrive in the front of

the crematorium, and wondering if they had any water. And I lay there when I learned how these things went, because there was a fence which divided us from one crematorium. And from the other side of the road from us there was another crematorium. So every day we went between these two crematoriums and we wind up on another road where there also were four crematoriums. When we were there a few days we already find out these things. And there were at the fence, who worked there at the crematorium, Jewish men who came to the fence when we had a little free time there, and through the fence they told us how it goes. And I remember I was listening for a while and then I turned around and I left. I couldn't....

So according to them it worked this way: They arrived; they chased them into the lobby kind of thing and there they told them to undress, and they asked where they're going and they said whatever they said. Okay? And then they chased them into the gas. And when it was over they opened the door and this was a huge mountain of dead bodies which they had a hard time to turn away from each other. And I remember at this point, when he said that they put on ties -- no, what is that -- strings -- what is the heavier stuff than string?

Q: Rope?

A: Rope, yeah, ropes around them, and they pull it to the overns. And so I remember that here I left, but I was wondering that the other girls, they're staying there. And so I don't know what else they said. But anyway, in a week we know what Auschwitz was.

And we went every day and sometimes they -- when a transport came in and they don't want us to mix together, we went on a different road. And this is what we saw. The transports just arrived and they were standing there, children and all kinds of people. There were young women, too, who didn't leave their children. There was a grandmother; the grandmothers went usually with the babies. But if no grandmother, the young women had no one with whom to leave the children. So this friend of ours, also who was a young woman, went with her little girl and died. And many, many young women died with children; not just the old.

So anyway, I remember once when we passed by I made my eyes like this and hugged my clothes like this (indicating), not to see anything, not to have in my mind the picture of what I saw. But, of course, you can't help it. You walk there every day. Later they put on some kind of, I don't know, tree branches so we can't see it well. But I remember this very much so, that there were these people and there was the SS on horseback. And evidently they made noise, but I don't know what was going on, but the SS on the horse chased them.

And I remember a little girl in a sailor blouse playing with a little boy and I knew -- and they were new -- that in a half an hour they will be dead and you would just see the flames coming out. And this is how it was during the whole summer.

And as I said, these things get hold in my mind

and I didn't care about nothing. If they gave me something to eat, I ate; if they didn't, I didn't. I did everything ultimately, just what the others did I did, and constantly just one thing: the way how they went, how they took off their clothes, they were chased in the creamtorium, how they sat, what they said to each other.

And it went on almost, I remember, at the end of August. And in the meantime, day and night, day and night, the huge transports were coming. And I remember one day -- I believe I said it before -- but my two best friends with whom I was, this woman who was older, I mean that could have been my mother, who was very good to me. And they knew this. You know, we went to work, we came to work. Before I was a talkative person. There went some conversation between them, whatever it was, I never take part in it. I just went like a zombie, which I was. And then this friend of mine one day says, "Julie, you know what's happening to you?" I didn't answer, so "You go nuts. Julie, do you know what happens to a person here who is going nuts? You'd better do something about it."

So what can I do about it? If I get out from here to the outside world, what is there? Auschwitz; okay. But then I just have to worry about myself, you know. I stopped worrying what happened to my dear ones and to worry about myself. I didn't, so what happens, happens. So I remember so clearly, when she told me these things on our way home, and we just passed the men's section, and I looked up. There

was a barrack there and the sun went down and I looked up and the sun was shining on the top of the barrack and I decided I had to do something about myself. So I looked down and what can I see? I mean, what is there which is better than what I am doing now? So I looked down and there was a patch of dry, yellow grass, and I made myself look at that point, to watch that. And all the way home to the barrack I made myself somehow to get out from here and see what went around me. And slowly and slowly I get that way. The difference was it still was Auschwitz out there, but that round of thoughts which was very destructive if it would have gone on, that stopped. It doesn't mean I didn't think about it, but not constantly, not like without interruption. (End of audio tape.)

So it went like that in Auschwitz every day. I really don't know if I should tell again the same things. You want me to? Why?

Q: Because we had some technical difficulties and those are important moments that you're talking about, wo we'll make sure and go over it.

A: So I told you about when one day we were coming home from work and the gate to the men's section was open and the men, they are just coming home from work, went through the gate. And we noticed the difference, that they looked, all of them, to the left like this (indicating). And we, "What is happening? Why they all look at the left?" So then

we had to turn to a road which we had on the other side of the same men's section. And then we saw there was the portable gallows put up there on the road and between two barracks, near to the fence where we could see it, there were three funny-looking somethings, like scarecrows or something. So we looked and then we realized that there were three bodies which was just hanged, taken off. They had three shovers; one -- they had their backs to us -- one of these long shovers, you know, with the long handle and the sharp edge was against the neck and the wooden handle was on the ground, and one on one side and the other, three of them. And this is where they put these bodies, three shovers. And now we knew why the prisoners had turned to the left. They wanted them to see what happens; probably they wanted to escape. So this was just one scene.

Another one that I didn't tell you about: There was this SS who they said was sick one day, so they took him from the front and he was in Auschwitz. And he really made up things, you know, to amuse himself. So one of them was one evening when we went home -- many times, you know, some people run ahead and lines were not too straight. We had the guards with the dogs always at the side and the back and front, but still we have to catch up, keep the line. And here was this guy on a -- he always went on a motorcycle. So what he did, he run on his motorcycle at the edge of our group to straighten it. So as he run on the motorcycle, if

you happened to be there, you were dead. So everybody run, you know, but this is how he straightened the line, running the motorcycle.

And I also told you that one day they brought in a man, a prisoner, and two SS came with him where we worked, you know, the work place. We sat on the floor, you know, with a huge bundle of all kinds of things. We worked on the floor getting the things. One day they brought in this man and two SS, and they told him to take off his pants, and we could see his bare behind. And first one SS with a big stick hit him, and then his stick broke, and the other took over. And they gave him 25 or something for something. I don't remember him crying. I would probably, if I heard, but I don't know what he did. This is another thing.

While I was working there, also one day I went out of the barrack to the walk, what we had there, and while coming back there was a truck almost in front of our barrack. And a Jewish driver was on the truck. And I looked around. He just came from the train, you know, loaded with things. And he stood on the truck and he picked out a wooden box which I knew at that time, you know, they used to sell it, I don't know, [inaudible] or this marmalade. Somebody brought it, you know, from Europe somewhere. And he looked around on the road, I looked around; there was no SS, so he handed me one and I took it back to the barrack. So maybe the poor fellow did something like that, that's why they brought him here.

And also, one day we got the word, and I don't know who started it, that we should sabotage things, what we handled. So let's say a piece of jewelry we broke. There were these rolls of beautiful silk damask, or fabric, you know (tape interference). So everything we thought we should destroy, which was worth it to destroy, we did. And then one day they said, "Okay. Stop now." Because they noticed. I'm still surprised that they didn't even notice better and we got away with it. I really don't know how it happened. Probably the work leader's idea it was and I still feel good about it. But I'm still surprised that they didn't know the origin or what.

Listen, dear, I could tell you so many things. I don't know. I'm a little bit tired.

Q: Go ahead.

A: Then at the beginning of October, one morning we went to work and as we did we saw something unusual happening. There was a section which was mainly just a field there, and we saw SS running around, back and forth. And as we turned we saw that one of the crematoriums, the one which was next to us, was on fire. And later we find out that what was happening, that the Jewish men who worked in the crematorium, they decided they had enough and they revolted. And they had a plan all together, you know, that they act at the same time, which they did. But it didn't turn out to their success. I think it was -- by the way, every three months those who worked

at the crematorium were executed. Just for three or four months they know that they worked there and unless some miracle happens, they will be gone in three or four months, gassed or shot, it doesn't matter.

So anyway, this morning they decided that if they have to die anyway, they'll do something. So it was on fire. That's why the SS was running there. Some of them escaped and were hiding in some Polish farmer's house, who they told about them and they were brought back and executed. But anyway, the good thing about it was that they killed, I don't know how many, a great number of SS while this went on, because they had, I don't know, ammunition of some kind which they used. I don't know if they were guns of some kind, and they killed while the riot went on. They killed, I don't know, 87 or around that many SS. So that was a big plus, but the rest of it wasn't, because they killed them right away, all those who took part in it. So we were again knocked over already; okay?

We noticed that the transports who were coming in, they were very poor in clothing and very skinny, and they looked like they'd been in a camp already for a long time. And also, they didn't bring nothing with them. The only thing what they brought and we had to, you know, select it, was some dried bread and salt, and no clothing, nothing, because everything was -- they got those already, in Poland for only God knows how long already. And they were spent and they

were very, very poor looking. So our work wasn't needed anymore, because they had nothing to select. You know what I mean?

Okay. They set up in order so we will be finished here, only a small number will stay there. And so believe you me, God help myself, I knew that there wouldn't be food, I knew that I might die, but that was the happiest day in my life that I don't have to see things, that I go away from this terrible hell, that I won't be here to see it.

And so I remember once -- I was sure that I won't live through another selection. So anyway, one certain day when we were finished work, we were standing next to the barrack waiting for lining up and go home, and some girls were very busy. There were shoes, between two barracks, piled up to the sky. Just shoes. And the girls went around there, looked around, and if nobody sees them -- because the shoes are very important. The winter was coming up and shoes were the most important because if they didn't have shoes they gave these wooden shoes, you know, like in Holland they are wearing? And it was very bad. They couldn't walk in it or nothing. So that's why the girls went to the shoes and picked out shoes for themselves.

And I was standing there and I looked at the shoes across the road and I said, "Maybe I should go and get a pair of shoes," because mine already was going. I said, "No, I won't need it. Why bother? If we have a selection I won't go through, I won't pass it, so why bother with the shoes?"

And I didn't. And these are certain, some kind of unexplainable things.

A girl I knew came to me with a nice-looking high leather shoe. She said, "Here, you want these? I have already mine. If you give a piece of bread for it, I give it to you." This is how we deal, you know, a piece of bread meant more than anything. So she gave me the shoe and I gave her the piece of bread. I said, "Maybe a better investment."

Anyway, that's why I had shoes. And it was a Saturday evening. You see, I remember very well. Don't ask me why I remember Saturday. The date I don't, I just know it was the end of October somewhere.

And we went home and I think it was Monday night and they have selection. So they chased us out of the barracks and we went into the bathhouse. And we took off our clothes and took the shower and knew we had to line up in the nude, wait for Mengele to judge us if we will live or we die. And as I was standing there it happened that I stood next to two far relatives of mine, two sisters who were huge and well built, with large breasts, and still, in Auschwitz after a few months, they still looked okay. And I looked at myself, you know, and I was tiny and I said, "Maybe it's not a good idea to stay next to them because of the contrast." You know, Mengele looks up, sees two strong, healthy women, and then he sees me, this is my deathbed right away. You know, I didn't move? I stayed there next to them.

And one by one my friends, they went to the side where they were still in workable condition and then some of them were standing in a corner with the unfortunates who were not. And I saw myself there already. And Mengele looked at me. I still don't know, I still don't understand, but anyway, he told me to go to those who still was capable of work. The thing is, I wasn't skinny. I always did lots of things, so I don't know, maybe he guessed that I had some life left in me or something. I don't know. But I'm telling you, I still can't believe it. I see that room so clearly sometimes. And I got there and my friends told me, "Oh, Julie, we were sure you don't make it." I said, "I was more sure than you that I won't make it."

And we didn't know what will happen. We know this, that every day they went on something, they started to evacuate Birkenau and taking transports into Germany. There was a section they called the C section, which was not a working section. Nobody worked there; only people who took care of them. These were the camps where they had the most selections and those who were capable, they shipped them to Germany, and those who were not, every day they gassed them.

And when the selection was over we didn't know what would happen to us. Always the barrack girl said, and we knew already well, everywhere was better than in Auschwitz. If you have a chance to -- nobody had a chance, because we didn't make our own changes; it was made for us. But if you

get out of here, you have a chance to live maybe. You never make it. Because we were thinking if the war -- you know, they won't let this place there; they will destroy everything. They won't let the Russians come in and see what went on and special people to stay there. So we were, "What they want from us?" We were sure they take us to Germany when they thought we were still fit.

So what happened, again we were lined up and we were marched into another section where we never heard about, although we passed it by often, and there were these barracks like everywhere else. And we went in, we found out how many, and then we saw these long tables, piled up some goods on the top and chairs around it, and we were told to sit down. And there were three kinds of material there which were brought in every day: paper, rubber and fabric of some kind. And we had to make of these like a ponytail. There was a nail in front of everybody and we had to get out the fabric, the three kinds, and make it into a very strong ponytail at least ten meters a day. So I still don't know what they did with it, but at that time they said that it was something to light up a bomb or -- I don't know. I don't know what it was at all.

So in a way we were lucky, because we were not sent out, you know, to field work or something. We were not lucky enough to go to Germany, but the work, just sitting there, it wasn't as bad, you know. But we had to produce good work, because if you didn't, then our fate was again at risk. It

had to be so strong that when the kapo came and pulled them, they were not supposed to break. And then when the SS came, they usually tested it. They put it on the floor and they stepped on it with their boots and they pulled it, and if it broke, then you got it from here to there, you know. Sometimes they just pass by and out of just the fun of it, they hit us, slapped us or kicked us.

So anyway, this was our new job. But as I said, we know this stuff, that more and more transports were taken away and they said something that the Russians are at Warsaw already. Then we asked why didn't they come if they are so nearby.

And so we went on with this work. And then the winter was coming and it was very, very cold, and sometimes they didn't put enough things on the table for us to make a good work of it, and that was terrible, because we couldn't produce. They just throw a few, but they didn't have enough anymore, so they just throw some chunks there, and it was impossible to produce anything out of it. I looked, I picked and I couldn't. So many others, they couldn't. And what happened, they came in, the kapo first slapped them around and then said, "Get up," and they took them out of the barrack and let them stand all day in the front in the cold day. Sometimes we saw them back; sometimes they took them away.

And so one day it happened to me. My two friends, they still were able to make something. It wasn't good. But

one day I just decided it doesn't make any sense. I was too nervous to pick and put them together, the tiny little bits, because it was a hopeless thing. And my friend, she had helped me a lot, you know, this older person -- please don't let me forget her story.

So anyway, I just gave up. I said, "I don't do it, that's all." But she heard me so I produced something, okay, but it wasn't good enough. The next day I had the same problem and then the kapo came and told me, with the rest of them, "You girls again come with me." I knew where I'm going and I was sure that that was the end. And I still remember as I walked through the long barrack in a haze, you know, I know that even if they don't kill me, if I stand there all day and everybody goes and kicks me around, there is not too much to hope for.

And we left the barrack, that main barrack where we worked, and there was a lobby. I use the elegant word "lobby"; there was this foyer, or I don't know how you call it. And when we went out there, I still don't know how, because I knew that in Auschwitz you don't ask, you don't beg, you can't expect any favors, and sometimes if you open your mouth you are worse off. There was nobody to turn to. And something happened. Just a few girls -- the kapo went ahead of me. I don't know how, but my lips formed the words, "Mr. Kapo," you know, in German, I said, "I am a good worker. It just happened that today I had Zahnschmerz," you know, a toothache.

And the reason I said toothache is because I hoped if I am not really sick, I just have a toothache, they won't kill me, because if you were sick, that was the worst thing in Auschwitz. If you were sick, then that was your end.

So anyway, he didn't look back, didn't know whose voice it was, and says, "You go back." And my friends, they didn't believe it when I went. I didn't believe it either. I still don't know why. He didn't see my face ever; he just heard my voice. He was a kapo who was there serving his sentence, a German. He wasn't an SS; he was a kapo who murdered somebody, so they brought him there from Germany to serve his time there. And he just listened to my voice, that's all, and let me go back.

Now, about my friend, I told you that we were from the same (interruption), so we lived in the same town.

Q: What's her name?

A: Sarah. And she had two little girls -- not too little; one was 14 years old, I think. And her husband was taken to the Russian front in this forced labor camp, so she was alone. But she was very resourceful. Her husband was -- and they were not rich people. The husband was away so she did all kinds of things. She was handy with the needle, all kinds of things to keep them going.

So when the Germans came in it was, as I said, Passover time, and it just happened before Passover -- her parents lived in another city and she took the children for vacation,

for Easter vacation, to be with the family, her mother and her sisters, and they went there. So when they took us away her children didn't come with us because the children were in another city with the grandparents.

So when we arrived in Auschwitz, what kept her going was the hope -- she hoped that there were in that town, which was her birthplace, some good people. She hoped they will save her two children, and that's why probably she had so much more energy to do things, because she was hoping that it was so. And we hoped, too.

One day we are sitting at this work, you know. The man who brought the material, who dumped it on the top of the table, one of them, they recognized each other. Sarah recognized the man; they were glad to see each other. It seems that the man just came to Auschwitz and he didn't know what was going on there. So Sarah asked him -- they lived close to each other, you know? "Do you know anything of my children and my mother?" He said, "Oh, yes, we came in together." This was a moment for Sarah when she lost her two children, her mother and two sisters at once. I watched her face, you know, a terrible sorrow. And she went on and she made the ponytail. And she knew, and we all knew, that they are dead, that they are never more.

Q: What happened to her?

A: We survived together, actually, the two of us. Yeah, and we came home together.

So anyway, it was, as I said already, winter and everything was much harder. But they did something good. It was November, I think. Because of the evacuation there are sections which were vacant of people. The A section where I was, and some other sections, they're completely empty. And we -- what they did, they brought our work place into one section and we were moved also to the same section, which made our life better, because we didn't have to have [inaudible] there, we didn't have to march in the winter, you know, from one barrack -- I mean one section to the other. We worked in the same section. So in the morning we just get up and we walk into the place where we did the same work. They didn't do this out of kindness, but as I said, for them it was less work, too, because the other places were already vacant.

So anyway, what they did to us when we moved the work place, what a truck could have done in one day, we for days and days carried on our shoulders. All the equipment, all the things, bags and everything, all day, back and forth, back and forth. The wind was so cold and so bad that we really thought we'd die there. They could have made it easier, but we were the ones who did it.

So this was already, as I said, wintertime and there was no heat at all in the barracks. We did things, for example, to just keep going. We brought from our place blankets, and I remember I tore up my only one for sleep which I had in the wintertime, so I could produce work, because there was no material on the thing. Or they brought frozen tires, auto

tires, which we had to cut. It was terrible. It was just terrible. And in the meantime, we didn't know what's going to happen. And I think it was at (end of video).

I also want to mention that when the winter started and we passed this C section, which I mentioned, in the morning we saw young women who threw themselves against the electric fence laying there. They just had enough and gave up. They threw themselves and got executed by the electricity. More and more every day they did it.

And I also told before that my father was in the United States. I don't know why, I'm a little bit confused, because you know, I told this before, certain things, and I don't know what will be left out or what not.

And that was the only reason I really wanted to live, because I said I didn't know about my brother, but if my father finds out that he has nobody, so I said to myself, "Unless they kill me, no matter how hard it is on me, I have to go on." And it did a lot to me, because, I'll tell you something: I told myself that I'd rather be dead, I don't want to live in a world where humans are doing this to humans. And I am sure if not that thought that I have this duty toward my father, I wouldn't have gone on.

And I did things -- only the things which was very, very hard on me. For example, if you were sick in Auschwitz, that was almost you were dead. If you didn't go to work and you stayed in the barrack, they went around in the barracks

picking up those who stayed home because they were sick, because this was an economic thing. Later, when the transports were not coming so many anymore, and they wanted to save on things in the gas chamber, they wanted to fill it up as much as possible. So in Auschwitz the biggest sin was if you were sick, so nobody wanted to say you were sick. Only then you were dead already, really, next day you stayed there.

So I was sick quite a few times with diarrhea, with all kinds of things, and I made myself to get up and go. And I run with high fever. I don't know how high it was, I just know I was sick, but I run. I mean, that's all the things what I did, consciously or unconsciously, to survive. But I really wasn't crazy about it, to stay alive, because everything would have been better than a day in Auschwitz, because it was -- first of all -- okay. Now we see and hear this guy at death row and we feel all bad about it. I am against capital punishment. I know that he did something very wrong, but I still am against to take human life. There are other punishments in this world.

But anyway, I just did certain things in order to, okay, if it depends on me I have to, but not because I -- I really didn't feel like it. But there was one thing, really, and mainly that we knew that the war can't last long. We know that. And so we thought that maybe we could last as long and past it. This was important. We all said, "We have to survive to tell the world." I don't know how much -- if it's worth it, but this was a very important thing for us, to tell the world what was going on in Auschwitz.

So anyway, we heard already gunfire in December. And also, we heard something, the people who brought in the men, who brought in the things, the supplies -- I didn't hear them, but it came down the grapevine -- that they stopped gassing the people at the end of November or something, that that man who was Hitler's next -- not Goebbels, the guy -- he visited Auschwitz, too; I don't know his name. Anyway, that he knew that they lost the war and he wants to make a peace offer for the allies, I think which he did, too. And that's why he stopped the gassing. But who could know? I still don't know if it was true or not.

So they don't come in to say that, "From now on we won't gas you," so it was just a rumor. I still don't know.

So anyway, then Christmas came. And I have a very strong feeling about this. I remember Christmas back -- you know, I have Christian friends and we were invited to their houses, you know, like for Hanukkah we invited them to our houses. And I remember that I knew that we were there working and I knew that Christmas was coming and I was wondering about Christmas in Auschwitz, you know? So I think we just worked half a day. But before I say this, outside the fence, you know, the electric fence, next to every section outside the fence there was a cute little cottage. The SS guard used it. It belonged to them, the guards. And inside of the fence there was a huge pine tree, very, very high. It was always there. We went back and forth, we saw it. So what happened?

Before Christmas they lighted up the huge pine tree with hundreds of lights outside. It was outside, you know, next to the guard cottage, but inside the camp next to the fence. And they celebrated the Christmas. And I was sitting there at my table and I said, "This is really something. Here in this place where they killed millions of Jewish children, they are celebrating the birth of Christ, the Jewish child who was born a Jew, lived a Jew, and died a Jew in the land of Israel. And the SS are celebrating Christmas." And the thing was there until New Years. It was Christmas in Auschwitz in their own fashion.

Okay. Christmas was over and I remember it was January the 1st -- yeah, exactly, that evening we were chased out of the barrack and lined up and then we marched to the bathhouse. And after the bathhouse the same thing, we lined up in the nude -- yeah, but before -- at one point just a few days before Christmas Sarah had some very bad case of frostbite and she couldn't walk on her feet, so she had to go to the hospital, the hospital barrack. And we knew that the hospital was next to the crematorium. This is how it worked: You went to the hospital; you usually never returned, and that was your last station before the crematorium. So nobody wanted to go to the hospital. And she said -- I talked to her. I said, "Sarah, why do you think about going there?" "Can't you see I can't get up on my foot?" They will notice anyway."

So anyway, she signed up. And there was another friend of mine with whom we were together, and so New Year's Eve they marched us to the bathhouse and they had another selection. Sarah wasn't there but my girlfriend, the other one, was there. So they selected the same way and this time I didn't make it. Those who were still good, like this friend of mine, they lined up separately and they were told that tomorrow they take them to Germany. And there was the corner and I went there with the rest of the unfortunates. You know, this is something which makes a difference how you feel. It is a difference.

So I was there and then when they said to us to get out in front of the barrack, it was dark and night already and it was very cold, and we just got out of the bath. We had no towel wear; we just put on ourself the one piece of dress and the little jacket that we had. And as we were standing in the dark, in the cold, across the street was one of the main crematoriums from us. And we are standing there and wondering what will be our fate. You know, we thought about maybe it doesn't work, maybe they don't gas anymore. And we looked and I saw that it was dark. There was no work going on, as you could see from there.

But it took a long time for us to stand there, and I had there a little girl who was, I don't know, about 14 years old or so, also a relative to us, and we were standing there and at one point she started to cry. And she stood

next to me and she said, "Julie, they will take us to the crema." This was the nickname for the crematorium. So I said, "Take a look. It doesn't look like there is anything going on there." So she looked but she still went on crying and crying. And at one point, you know, I was nervous. How should I know what was going on? I just wanted to calm her, but in the meantime I felt the same way.

So when she went on crying, at one point I yelled at her. I said, "Stop crying; we will see soon enough what happens." Anyway, they told us to start and we passed by and within a few yards what we passed by there we didn't know if we will be taken in there or what will happen. But we passed it by and we went back -- and I remember, this was the last day when the Christmas tree was still there. And as we went through the gate this girl -- I forget her name -- said to me, "Julie, you were right. They didn't take us to the crema." You know, just like a child would say -- as I've mentioned, I always compared this to a child who is taken to the dentist and it wasn't as bad. So she's relieved it wasn't as bad, she's relieved because we didn't go into the crema.

After a while these things are so casual to you, so common -- I can't explain how it is. But it would be here a big, big thing, like it is and it should be, but after a while it was like the normal way of life. Not because we took it lying down like that.

But the next day I went to work and the three of us were best friends to the end and one of them who was selected for Germany wasn't there anymore. And I was sitting at the table and I felt very, very sad. I felt alone. Sarah was away, who knows what is with her; my other best friend went to Germany, and I was alone there. So I looked up; Sarah walked in. So I said, "Are you back?" I couldn't believe it, I thought she was dead. She said, "No, and I heard some rumors, but nobody was taken away while I was there."

So I still don't know if it was a rumor, but maybe it wasn't. But they shot people. It wasn't just the only way to kill people, you know. At the same time they brought in a bunch of Polish people and they shot them next to the crematorium. So evidently, they didn't -- it doesn't work. I don't know. I can't say that it worked or it didn't.

So we were working there and it was cold and there was no food, and at one point Sarah said a couple of days after, "Julie, I'll tell you something: I want to go back to the hospital. My foot still hurts." And she said, "Not because of that. I'll tell you: I don't know what it is, but in the hospital we were only two to a cot and we even had a pillow and blanket. And they gave some -- very little food, less than here, but it was warm." And I looked at her and I thought she was crazy. I said, "Here I am just terribly happy to see that you came back, and you want to go back!" And she said, "Julie, it doesn't matter. If I have to die, I'd rather die in the warm barrack."

Okay. No, I couldn't visualize myself being there alone. I mean, I wasn't alone, but our group wasn't there. So the other girl went, and she will go and I will be alone. So she said to me, "Why don't you come, too?" And then I thought about what it meant before to go to (interruption). Anyway, she didn't [inaudible] on this idea, and she said, "Julie, if you come or not, I'm going, because if I come back here I have to work hard, I am sitting in the cold, I have nothing to eat. What I had that few days is much better, whatever comes."

So she went back to the barrack and she signed up for next day to enter the hospital barrack. And I did too. And all night I was thinking, "My God, now I'm doing exactly the same thing which I was so afraid all during this time, entering the hospital barrack." So now I really was at the point, I didn't want her to be alone, whatever it was, and I didn't care too much what will be, one way or the other.

Anyway, the next morning we went and she was right. We went there and we said we are -- I was her daughter. This is what we said, because in this way, let's say -- not because they don't separate you, but we figured it's better if we say this. So I was known there as her daughter and she was my mother. So we got a cot and it was really very nice, much better. And after a few days we heard very close by a gun and bombing and everything, and we knew that something is happening not far, the war is coming to Auschwitz.

And one morning we wake up and hear shoveling coals and something going on and we see two barrack women, who worked in the barrack, brought in some coal from somewhere and they're shoveling it under the bed. We are thinking, "Why do they need it?" So they are smart; they knew what was going on and they wanted to have some coal. They stole it from some barrack, so they could have it warm in the barrack.

And then when it got light in the morning somebody come in and said that the electricity went out of the fence. You know what it meant? We couldn't believe it. How come the electricity went out? So everybody went outside and it was true, the electricity went out of the fence and we hoped that the SS left, too. But there were the SS walking around. And the little guardhouse, which I mentioned before, papers were thrown out and all over around there were official papers or what, I don't know, they threw it out. So this showed already some kind of very unusual thing. Then Sarah and I went around and we saw a woman bringing under her arm some clothing and we said, "Where did you get it?" "Just go and get it. There is a barrack which has clothing in it and it's open and you can go and take it."

So we were like hit on the head with something, you know? The electricity is not in the fence and everything looked like it was coming to the end. So we went with Sarah and we picked up just a few things. I remember boots and a coat and a few sweaters -- I don't know. And we were coming

back on one side and we saw an SS walking on the other side. And we -- of course, I thought that he will shoot us right away. He saw us, but he didn't do nothing.

So we came back to the barrack, we put on the clothes, and we went out. And somebody came with a huge, like this (indicating), bread, ten or fifteen pieces of bread. I said, "Where did you get it?" She said, "You go -- there is a barrack you could get it." So we went and there was a barrack and there was a chicken wire fence, and Sarah went under the chicken wire and went into the barrack and she told me to stay there at the fence, not to go with her. So she said, "I will bring the bread, I'll hand it to you under the fence and you will pick them up."

In the meantime the SS came right there and he shot up into the air and we looked around and we thought that maybe he will shoot us. I mean, just yesterday he would have done that. But I'll tell you something: When you see bread with a hungry stomach, you forget that you could be shot right away, you know? You don't care. Nobody cared. As far as I knew he didn't shoot anybody.

So Sarah came and she gave me the stuff, shoved it under, she came over and we went back to the barrack with all the bread. We were fortunate, because we were not really sick. Her foot became better, and I was very weak, but I was not sick. So we could get around. Many of them, like Irene, was laying there. This is the time when I met Irene, who was laying next to us.

And so these miracles started to happen in Auschwitz, but we didn't know what will happen, because we didn't know the SS was still there. They still could come and kill us all and then they won't leave a place like this, you know, for the world to see and us there alive.

So we went on in no-man's land. The Russians were not there and then the SS left. In a couple of days we didn't see any more SS and we hoped that the Russians will come, but we didn't know when. So this is what happened, what I described today when the two Germans came in and killed the man who had the girlfriend.

And also, I told before, there was a few days later -- again, I know the day but I don't know the date. I know it was a Thursday evening. We were in our barrack and our barrack leader was a very high class, Polish gentile woman. I remember she walked through the cots, you know, the rows between our cots there, with a cigarette holder in her mouth, and I think she was some Polish aristocrat and they put her there for some political reason or something.

But anyway, this Thursday evening somebody comes in and they said an SS -- not a transport, but some SS came from somewhere else to the camp. So we knew already that, okay, it is not the Russians yet. So it was evening and dark and this barrack lady went to our barrack and she told us, "In this barrack there are no Jews," she told us, meaning -- that's all she said -- meaning that if they come for us,

because they wanted to take only the Jews, that we are not Jews; we are women, you know? So anyway, through the open door we heard they are chasing out of the other barracks the girls, noise, crying and everything. And Sarah and another girl decided that they will go under the beds. In case they come in, they are not there. I, with my honest mind all the time, I didn't want to do anything which wasn't honest, so I put on my coat. I was ready. I stood at the end of my bed and I said, "If they come in, if I hide under the bed and they chase me out, then they know that's why I am hiding. But maybe if I stay here standing up, I'll only go when they want me badly to go, but otherwise, I won't."

So anyway, I stood there. Later, Sarah and the girl came out because they said it was very uncomfortable.

So the next thing, the SS came to the door and told that "All the Jews, her aus." And the barrack lady went through the barrack and said, "All those who are Jews, get out." So we didn't know what, if she changed her mind or not, but we said, "What she told us before, we don't have to move, we are not Jews. That's what she meant." So they stood there, the SS, for a little while and nobody moved and they left. And that was the last of them. We had a few days, from Thursday to Saturday evening, when finally somebody came and said, "The Russians are here."

So in the morning after the SS left, we went out in the morning and the unfortunate girls, you know, the blankets

are rolled up on their back and ready when they walked outside the fence, I don't know how many we counted, who were shot during that little visit there. I don't know if they said they can't walk or they wanted to get off the group or what, but there were many.

Also, we went into a barrack, Sarah and I. We looked for something. We looked already for things maybe what we will need in case we survive, you know, after when the SS was gone. And there was this what they call a [Heizung]. I don't know if you've heard. It's a German word and it was a heating thing. It was built through the whole barrack. It was never heated, but it was there. Anyway, we went into this barrack and there was a woman laying there and her eyes and face were shot out. They just shot wherever they went.

So Saturday, as I said, they came in, "The Russians are coming." And there was no electricity, only candles. And the barrack leader lighted a candle and was in the front -- not outside; inside. And those of us who could walk, we went up there. And after a while a young, rosy-cheeked Russian soldier came in. He had a white sheet over his uniform. You know, this is what they wore in wintertime, because in the snow, they became one with the snow with the white sheet. And he came in and the Blockaelteste -- Blockaelteste, I say it in German -- the barrack leader, she was standing there with a candle in her hand. And she said, "Thank you for coming. This is the moment that we were waiting for." And he didn't

know where he was, I think. He went through the barrack and he went out, and we realized that now we were free.

And I remember the pain that I had, knowing that I was alive and just a few yards away millions were killed, and among them my dear ones. I threw myself on the bed and I cried and cried. I think that was my last big cry, because after a while I just stopped crying.

So anyway, this was the time that Irene, what I related to you, that she was there and she was very sick and we tried to do everything with her to keep her alive. And every night she had all kinds of pain and everything. And so I went to her as she was laying there and I said, "Irene, we are free. You will be fine and we are free." But she didn't respond. I remember she was laying there and her eyes looking to the distance and like a smile she had on.

And so next day it was Sunday and I saw her and I sat next to her on the bed and I watched her, and the same thing. And around ten o'clock in the morning she died, and we took her out to -- there was a huge pile of dead bodies already. There were many, many deaths during this period in the barracks, natural deaths. I don't know the excitement or what, I don't know. But I know one thing; there were two sisters not far from our bed, and as I walked I saw them. The young girl was sick, but they looked okay. They shared the same bed. And just during this period as I walked one morning, the older one was crying, but the younger one was

laying there next to her. So I said to her, "Don't cry, she will be better." She looked up and said, "Are you crazy? Can't you see she's dead?" And the little sister just died there and was still laying there. The last days.

Q: Did you say that the last days people died?

A: Yes, in the barrack, yeah, many more died than before. I don't know what it was, maybe they were ready, I don't know.

There was a gentleman, also, who died next to us there, and quite a few, so we helped them to carry them out to the pile already frozen. And I hoped Irene to get well, but she didn't.

Okay. So, now, I told how I got home, too, but I don't want to get in it. I hope it is there.

Q: Yes, and actually, the next person has arrived downstairs.

A: Okay.

(End of interview.)