

1 Interview with LINDA BREDER
2 Holocaust Oral History Project
3 Date: July 17, 1990 Place: San Francisco, CA
4 Interviewer: Judith Heim
5 Transcriber: Peggy Canterbury
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7

8 Q WOULD YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF?

9 A Yes, my name is Linda. My Czech name
10 Libusha Breder.

11 Q AND THIS IS FOR THE SAN FRANCISCO HOLOCAUST
12 ORAL HISTORY PROJECT.

13 LINDA, TELL ME THE DATE OF YOUR BIRTH.

14 A I am born the 24th of February 1924.

15 Q AND WHAT CITY AND COUNTRY WERE YOU BORN IN?

16 A I'm a native of Czechoslovakia and my city
17 is in eastern Slovakia where I was born only, but I
18 didn't live there. The name of the city -- I can
19 spell it: Stropkov, S-t-r-o-p-k-o-v, Stropkov.

20 Q AND DID YOU LIVE WITH YOUR PARENTS AND
21 WHO'S IN YOUR FAMILY?

22 A I come from a family of five: three
23 brothers, one sister, and I am from a twin. Between
24 the three brothers is one of my twin brother.

25 Q WERE THEY OLDER THAN YOU OR YOUNGER, YOUR

1 SIBLINGS?

2 A I was not the youngest of the girls. My
3 mother died at childbirth and my sister lives in Daly
4 City now. She was the youngest.

5 Q SO YOU HAD TWO BROTHERS AND THEN YOUR TWIN
6 BROTHER?

7 A Yes, my twin brother and sister. And my
8 family came from a orthodox Jewish family. We lived
9 in this part in eastern Slovakia all our lives. I
10 mean, until the war, until the tragedy came.

11 Q DO YOU WANT TO TELL US ABOUT YOUR CHILDHOOD
12 MEMORIES BEFORE THE WAR?

13 A I can record before the war only happy
14 times.

15 Q BUT WHEN YOUR FAMILY WAS OBSERVANT OF THE
16 HOLIDAYS, DO YOU RECALL OBSERVING THE HOLIDAYS?

17 A Yes, we observed the holidays. We lived in
18 a very nice small city, I would say, in a mixed
19 neighborhood. And I attended public schools and had a
20 very happy childhood, although I had a stepmother but
21 I didn't know until maybe I was twelve years old. She
22 was excellent and good and I don't think so that my
23 own mother could be better.

24 Q WHEN YOUR OWN MOTHER DIED, HOW OLD WERE
25 YOU?

1 A I was two years old.

2 Q AND THEN YOUR FATHER REMARRIED SOON AFTER?

3 A My father remarried, but we were five so my
4 aunt -- my mother's sister -- she raised my younger
5 sister and my grandfather two of my brothers. So
6 actually at home with my father and stepmother, we
7 were only the twins.

8 Q AND YOU HAD A LOT OF EXTENDED FAMILY
9 NEARBY?

10 A Yes. My father's family, they were eleven
11 children. And from my mother's side, ten or twelve.
12 I do recall it was fun. Every vacation I was at the
13 other aunt's house.

14 Q AND YOU WERE ALL FROM THE SAME AREA?

15 A Not the same area, not always; but it was
16 fun traveling in the summer. So I don't know exactly
17 where the rest of the family were living but close by.
18 Although one aunt was living in Essen, Germany; two
19 aunts in Berlin; one aunt in Switzerland. But they
20 always came home for the big holidays to the
21 grandparents where we joined them and the family got
22 together.

23 Q AND YOUR GRANDPARENTS WERE FROM
24 CZECHOSLOVAKIA?

25 A My grandparents came from Czechoslovakia.

1 I have two aunts in Israel, those who were living in
2 Berlin. And they told me that actually my family from
3 my maternal side came from Frankfurt and my great,
4 great, great, grandfather was the chief Rabbi of
5 Frankfurt, the ghetto. And my great grandfather was
6 born in Switzerland. And from my father's side they
7 came from the east. But this region where we lived, I
8 have it on record about back from the seventeenth
9 century always in the same neighborhood.

10 Q WHAT ARE YOUR FIRST MEMORIES OF THERE BEING
11 A PROBLEM OR DISTURBANCE WHERE YOU LIVED AND IN YOUR
12 LIFE?

13 A Until I was twelve or thirteen, I didn't
14 experience any anti-Semitism, so in fact I had lots of
15 Christian girlfriends and they always asked me on
16 Christmas to come with them at Christmas night to
17 church at midnight. My father didn't approve, nobody
18 from my family, but I always managed to go there. And
19 I know I slept over there at their houses. They came
20 over for Sabat to our houses.

21 So we didn't feel any anti-Semitism until 1938 or
22 '37 maybe. Then we had lots of guests coming over
23 through the borders, because we lived very close to
24 the borders -- Polish borders in the eastern part of
25 Slovakia. And we had lots of guests always sitting at

1 the table and talking about war. But I didn't have an
2 interest of that. I tried always to leave the house
3 and go out with my girlfriends. But I know they came
4 from Poland and were escaping through Czechoslovakia
5 to Hungary and were talking about ghettos and
6 anti-Semitism.

7 Q DO YOU REMEMBER THE LANGUAGE THEY WERE
8 SPEAKING?

9 A They were speaking mostly in Yiddish and
10 many in Polish, but the Slovakian language is very
11 close to the Polish language, so they could understand
12 each other. But mostly Yiddish.

13 Q AND SPOKE YIDDISH ALSO?

14 A Yes, yes, also Yiddish. So I just remember
15 that they were staying overnight and talking that what
16 bad times they are and they were hungry and they
17 needed food and clothing. And since in our house
18 always poorer people stayed overnight and having a
19 meal, so for me it was nothing new with that.

20 But later on in 1938 when the first of September
21 or it was 1939, I think so. First of September we had
22 to go to school and suddenly the siren blew and it was
23 mobilization. So then we knew that Hitler marched
24 into Poland. It was 1939 but at this time Slovakia
25 was already independent. It got autonomy and we had a

1 president, a Catholic priest, Dr. -- Monsignor Dr.
2 Josef Tiso. And the papers at this time were already
3 full of propaganda and anti-Semitic remarks of the
4 Jews. And the windows where the Jews' stores were,
5 painted with Stars of David. And shortly after, what
6 I recall, they kicked us out from school so I couldn't
7 attend any more school. And in 1939, I don't
8 remember, maybe a half a year later or so they even
9 kicked us out from our houses.

10 We lived on the main street in the city and we
11 had to leave the house and move to the back of the
12 city and no Jews were allowed to live on the main
13 streets. So we were three families in one room and
14 also Jewish people who were employed by some firms
15 lost their jobs.

16 And we couldn't go to school. Many families
17 lived so close together, so it was already a problem,
18 kicking and shoving. Everybody was nervous. And on
19 the streets and on the Jewish stores and houses were
20 slogans: "Jews go to Palestine." I can't translate
21 exactly from the Czech language, but on the main
22 street on the pavement was with big white letters:
23 "Jews and Gypsies are the same and they deserve
24 concentration camps." I didn't have an idea what is a
25 concentration camp, what the meaning of it is. But

1 naturally we were frightened.

2 One day it came an ordinance we have to wear the
3 Star of David, too. So everybody had to have a Star
4 of David sewed on the left side above the heart. So
5 we had to wear it always. We couldn't go out from the
6 house. Curfew was only after six o'clock and only to
7 certain stores. My father didn't have too much
8 saving. We were two children at home, my brother and
9 me, and so my brother and my father went to the
10 villages and they were cutting wood. For their labor
11 they brought home potatoes and flour and eggs and so
12 on. So we were living on this.

13 And then came an ordinance: Every Jewish family
14 had to turn in all their silver and valuables,
15 whatever -- we didn't have too much, but silver
16 candlesticks, something, radios -- they confiscated
17 everything. But this was confiscated still by the
18 Slovakian Republic. And interesting was the Slovakian
19 neighbors who were our best friends, they pointed a
20 finger at us: Jews, Jews, Jews, go to Palestine.

21 Q DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT YEAR THIS WAS
22 HAPPENING?

23 A In 1939 and 1940 right after Poland -- the
24 German Army marched into Poland, Hitler armies. I
25 remember when I saw the German soldiers marching

1 through our city up to the border. We couldn't
2 believe it, what's going on. But they were very nice,
3 the soldiers. They didn't bother anybody, just
4 marched through.

5 Q SO THEY JUST MARCHED THROUGH YOUR COUNTRY?

6 A Just marched through. Through Slovakia to
7 the borders because they went from different sides up
8 on the Czechoslovakian border down to Slovakia through
9 the Carpathian Mountains. Again from different sides
10 they marched into Poland. I was still not alarmed.

11 Q DID YOU -- BUT YOU DIDN'T GO TO SCHOOL?

12 A No. At this time I was not in school
13 anymore. Because at the end of September we couldn't
14 go. Jewish people -- I mean, students were kicked
15 out.

16 Q IT WAS ABOUT THAT TIME THAT YOU WERE NOT IN
17 SCHOOL?

18 A No. I was not in school. But in those
19 houses still one of the teachers -- Jewish teachers
20 got together the Jewish children and we could attend
21 privately classes; it was not allowed to gather in
22 groups. But still we went on and studied whatever we
23 could. We lived in the back of the city until 1942.

24 In 1942 one night the Hlinka guard -- That's --
25 The Hlinka guard is a equivalent to the S.S. Guards

1 what was in Germany. They came into the house and all
2 the girls in each Jewish family from sixteen to
3 twenty-four, -five, and they took us along. We had
4 time only to pack a toothbrush and nothing else. It
5 was in the night and not at the daytime so the rest of
6 the population wouldn't see what was going on. The
7 Hlinka guard was very cruel. They were special
8 trained units for propaganda and doing riots against
9 the Jews in Slovakia which was unheard in the
10 existence of Czechoslovakia, although Czechoslovakia
11 altogether was only twenty years old. Czechoslovakia
12 before the First World War didn't exist. It was
13 created in 1918 from three nationalities: Czech,
14 Moravians, and Slovaks. And Ruthenia naturally, too.

15 Q THAT WAS WHEN YOU WERE OVER SIXTEEN?

16 A Yes, I was already over sixteen. What
17 school I attended altogether is lower high -- I didn't
18 get my diploma and I was only sixteen years old.

19 Q THE GUARDS CAME DURING THE NIGHT?

20 A During the night. And in the city on the
21 main street were three trucks with girls. At
22 nighttime they took us to another city. We traveled
23 on the border far to another city where they
24 concentrated all the girls from the eastern part. And
25 the city where we were concentrated was Poprad. It

1 was also on the border also not far away from Poland.
2 When we came to Poprad, it was into army barracks.
3 There were already girls from other cities, and I
4 recognized them. And the same thing went on all over
5 the eastern part of Slovakia. We were there about
6 maybe four, five days. I don't recall how long.

7 But the guards treated us already there like
8 soldiers. We had to get up early in the morning on
9 roll call. We had to clean the barracks. We had to
10 bring water. And it was not -- they didn't have any
11 -- any, I mean, plumbing in the barracks, so we had to
12 go out to the toilets, outside the barrack, and it was
13 March -- end of March. It was the 24th or the 26th of
14 March and in this time in March in this part of the
15 country is still very cold. It's snow, winter, and
16 frost. We didn't have proper clothing, proper shoes,
17 nothing, because we didn't know where we were going .

18 Q WHAT DID YOU THINK WHEN THEY CAME TO GET
19 YOU?

20 A They told us, well; you are young and
21 strong; your parents don't have what to eat, they
22 don't have jobs; you are going to work and you can
23 provide for them. So it was a happy time because we
24 thought why not; we were going to help.

25 Q SO YOU HAD HOPE WHEN THEY TOOK YOU?

1 A Absolutely, absolutely.

2 Q Your parents didn't --

3 A We were not prepared. We didn't know.

4 Q DO YOU REMEMBER SAYING GOODBY?

5 A My parents didn't know where they took us.

6 What can you do when they are the rulers. And you
7 have to go, you have to go. Besides these, they
8 weren't very gentle with anybody. Kicking and shoving
9 and screaming.

10 Q SO --

11 A They told us: You Jews so and so, you are
12 not going lay around here and you are now going to see
13 what work is; you never worked in your life; now it's
14 time for you to do something. So you know how it
15 goes. Half scared but half happy that we will help
16 out.

17 So when we came to those barracks, we were
18 thousand girls from the neighbor in my city together
19 there. Very young. And one night again, roll call.
20 We had to go out -- jump out from the bunks and line
21 up in five in a row and march to the railroad station,
22 which was about two or three kilometers from the army
23 barracks. And also we thought because we were 999
24 girls, they brought from a city farther from my town,
25 a doctor who will take care of us and he is going to

1 help if some medical thing occurs.

2 When we came to the railroad station, there was
3 already a cattle car prepared for us. We were very
4 surprised because who heard ever that normal human
5 beings are going to travel in cattle cars? But the
6 guards were around the whole train station, some of
7 the parents came because somebody told them what they
8 are doing to us, but they couldn't go close. We had
9 to jump in -- actually pushed in -- because it is very
10 high to get in the cattle cars. And in the cattle car
11 it was nothing there, no straw, no nothing. It was a
12 bucket of water and another bucket for whatever we are
13 going to have to use it. And they pushed us in about
14 forty or fifty in one cattle car.

15 Q WERE YOU WITH ANYONE THAT YOU KNEW?

16 A Yes, from my town and other cities when I
17 was vacationing with my aunts, and so I had friends
18 all over the eastern part of Slovakia, I knew them.
19 In fact I knew the doctor, too, because he was living
20 about forty, fifty kilometers from our city. My aunt
21 was living there and I was playing with his daughter.

22 So his daughter was there, too.

23 Q DO YOU REMEMBER HIS NAME?

24 A Yes: Doctor Kaufmann.

25 Q HE WAS A JEWISH DOCTOR?

1 A Sure, only a Jewish doctor. They wouldn't
2 send another one. They locked up all the wagons --
3 the cattle cars -- and we went. It was dark still and
4 very cold. I had a very light coat because I thought
5 what do I have to need to take more things. If I need
6 they will send me. Cuddled together. When we had to
7 go to the bathroom, there was the other bucket. The
8 water was gone. It was I don't know how long.
9 Suddenly there was nighttime. Suddenly daytime. We
10 couldn't look out from the cattle car, because there
11 were no windows, only a little opening at the top. I
12 was tiny and very light and thin. My girlfriend said,
13 "Why don't you step on my shoulders and look out?"
14 What are you going to see? And the train stopped
15 suddenly. I looked out from the window and I saw its
16 -- They said we are going to Germany and it was not
17 Germany. There was a sign in Polish, because I speak
18 Polish, too. And the guards were screaming and other
19 guards came in, Germans. So on the borders, the
20 Slovakia guards left and now the S.S. were there.
21 They guarded us and they didn't open the cars. We
22 couldn't empty the bucket. Whatever we had to eat, we
23 finished. It was cold and bitter. I tell you, I
24 don't know how long we traveled; I think so, maybe one
25 and a half day or more. I am not sure. It was

1 because we were standing a lot on the side railing.

2 And in the daytime it was late in the afternoon,
3 suddenly the train stopped. The S.S. opened the cars
4 and it was a ditch right where the train stopped --
5 middle in the field. And they started shoving out:
6 "Out, you Jewish whores, jump." And they were beating
7 us and out we jumped. So everybody stepped out and to
8 line up in rows for a roll call. I never lined up so
9 it was panic. Everybody wanted to stay with their
10 friends and they were screaming and beating. But when
11 they spotted Dr. Kaufmann -- he was not in my wagon,
12 in my car. He stepped out of the train, so one S.S.
13 man spotted him. He went special to him -- I was
14 already in line -- and started screaming and laughing
15 and beating him: "One man with a thousand Judinen --
16 thousand Jewesses," and he was beating him and
17 kicking. And he said, "I'm a doctor; I came because I
18 had to take care of people here." And people were
19 sick, vomiting, and crying. But they killed him in
20 front of us.

21 Q YOU REMEMBER SEEING THAT?

22 A (Nods head.)

23 Q THE OTHER GIRLS WERE THERE --

24 A We were petrified.

25 Q -- AT THIS POINT?

1 A That was my first experience with dead.

2 Q WITH SEEING HIM BE KILLED?

3 A (Nods head.)

4 Q YOU ALWAYS PROBABLY THOUGHT HE WAS GOING TO
5 TAKE CARE OF YOU?

6 A Yes. When he stepped out in 1942 and we
7 had to line up and march, we marched maybe a half an
8 hour and then suddenly we saw barbed wire, lots of
9 barracks inside, but dead. Nobody there. Quiet.
10 Nobody. We didn't see anybody. When we came to the
11 gate we saw "Arbeit macht Frei" and still we didn't
12 know what it is. We marched in on one side. I saw --
13 When we marched into Auschwitz, on the left side was a
14 big building with a big chimney. This was a
15 crematorium, but this was in the camp.

16 Q YOU REMEMBER SEEING THAT?

17 A Absolutely. I didn't know what it was. I
18 thought that was probably the factory where we were
19 going to work. You see a brick building nicely
20 landscaped around and you didn't see one soul there.
21 Nothing. So we marched in and then they took us to
22 the barracks. It was fenced up. Ten barracks,
23 two-story barracks, brick barracks from the men's
24 camp. They expected us, because we were the first
25 women transport whatsoever entered Auschwitz. No

1 women were there before. They were prepared for us
2 only with ten barracks. When we came into this
3 fenced-up place, they were already lined up, women in
4 striped uniforms. A day before we came they brought
5 from another camp from Ravensbruck, prisoners, German
6 prisoners, women prisoners who were sentenced for
7 life, criminals, and were serving their term in jail.
8 They brought them to Auschwitz and those were later
9 our Kapos, not right away. They took us over.

10 Q SO THE WOMEN THERE --

11 A One day before they waited for us and we
12 had to march to the left barracks -- it was barrack
13 ten -- line up and wait. We didn't get no water, no
14 food, until a S.S. came. They recorded everything,
15 lined us up, and then we could go into the barrack.

16 Q DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT THEY RECORDED WHEN YOU
17 CAME?

18 A I don't know. They counted us more. And
19 whatever belonging we had -- I forgot -- we could take
20 along this time our belongings to the camp, but we had
21 to leave it between the two barracks. We were taken
22 to the barrack ten, so between nine and ten we had to
23 leave our suitcases, whatever we had, except our
24 clothing. So then after an hour or two, three, four
25 -- I don't recall -- we could go into the barracks.

1 They were little rooms about nine by twelve or ten by
2 fifteen, very little. We had to go fifty in one room.
3 It was no straw, nothing on the floor. Everything
4 bare, nothing, not heated, nothing.

5 Q YOU SAY FIFTY?

6 A Fifty girls in one room. And it was no
7 water either. Only in the basement was a pipe where
8 from the pipe was dripping water on one side and other
9 side and it was a kind of a sink, a round sink, like
10 the cattle was drinking, what I saw on farms. There
11 was the only place where was water, and we were a
12 thousand. Can you imagine the first time we got to
13 the water? Everybody was pushing and screaming and we
14 were like animals.

15 Q TO GET TO THE WATER?

16 A To get to the water. And we had to go to
17 the bathroom and there was one room and maybe five or
18 six toilets. I don't recall how many. We had to go
19 there, too. But the Germans were already there. They
20 already were ten, fifteen years, twenty in prison so
21 they started beating us and screaming, "Go schnell; go
22 there, go in!" We were bewildered. We didn't know
23 what to do first.

24 Q THEY SPOKE JUST GERMAN TO YOU?

25 A Just German, but we all spoke German. In

1 Slovakia everybody speaks three languages. We spoke
2 Hungarian, Czech, German.

3 We were bewildered and they were screaming and
4 beating us to the barracks, to the water. Who was
5 strong enough made it. Who was not strong enough was
6 waiting until everybody finish. But it was a rule:
7 We couldn't go out after two hours. We couldn't go
8 out from the room. We were sitting on the floor,
9 huddled to each other and waiting for the morning.

10 Q WERE THERE GUARDS NEARBY?

11 A The guards were in the barracks outside in
12 the hallways and they came in also to look at us.
13 There was no water, no electricity. It was a
14 two-story barrack. In the morning -- early in the
15 morning, it was still -- it was dark. We had to go
16 out for a roll call. They called, "Out, out, out!"
17 We had to go out to the front of the barrack. They
18 had to count us, if we didn't escape. Who could
19 escape from there? How? But we had girls also who
20 had diabetes and sick. The first night three or four
21 girls jumped out from the second-floor windows to
22 their deaths.

23 Q THE PEOPLE WHO CAME --

24 A With me.

25 Q -- ALL MANAGED TO GET INTO THE BARRACKS?

1 A It was crowded the first night. They
2 couldn't take it. They were diabetics and it got to
3 them. Not everybody is strong enough; couldn't take
4 it.

5 Q THEY JUMPED OUT?

6 A They committed suicide. From my city
7 actually were two.

8 Q AND --

9 A We saw them because we lined up in the
10 morning for roll call; they were still laying there.
11 They didn't take them away. So it went on a couple of
12 days. And we had still our civilian clothing. From
13 the third-floor window you could see to the men's camp
14 and in the morning they had also a roll call. So the
15 girls saw them. And the men just pointed. They
16 couldn't talk; just pointed whatever we have in our
17 wallets and valuables, to take it off and bury it. We
18 didn't understand them, what they mean.

19 Q THEY WERE SIGNALING?

20 A What to do, but we didn't know they were
21 going to take away from us everything: our personal
22 clothing, what we had on. But in a couple days when
23 we were in the morning on roll call, they took away
24 the first fifty girls, separated fifty girls.

25 Q FIFTY OF THE GIRLS?

1 A Fifty of the girls they took away, and
2 between two barracks they built a tent. I was between
3 the first fifty. My number tattoo is 1173. I'm the
4 hundred seventy third Jewish woman ever to enter
5 Auschwitz and I was between the first fifty, and we
6 went in the tent. On the side were already lined up
7 S.S. guards. The first S.S. wrote in our names on the
8 Karthoteke: name, where from, and so on. And I got
9 the number 1173. The first thousand were the Germans,
10 and I was the one hundred seventy third girl from
11 Slovakia.

12 Then I had to go further down and there was
13 another S.S. I had earrings. I had some little
14 chain. I had a watch, too. To take off everything.
15 And to put there in a box which was there. And
16 further down was a gynecologist, German S.S. doctor.
17 We had to strip and she examined us. In the middle of
18 the tent was a big pool with water about up to the
19 knees, dark water. After she examined me, I had to
20 jump into the water and in winter in cold water and to
21 dip in. It was the disinfection bath. They said the
22 Jews brought lice and fleas into the camp.

23 Q SO THEY TOLD TO YOU GO INTO THE WATER?

24 A Yes. And when I was through with my
25 cleansing bath, and another German couple already from

the prisoners threw at me a Russian uniform, "new clothing." Before we came to Auschwitz, they were in camp seventy-five thousand Russian POWs and they killed them all. And their uniforms we got.

Q SO THAT WAS YOUR NEW CLOTHES?

A Those were our new clothes and uniforms. And since we don't deserve better anything, the Russian clothing -- From those Russians, prisoners, we got. But one was big; one was small. Whatever you got you have to take. Besides this, we were shaved, our hair from everywhere.

Q WHEN YOU WERE EXAMINED, YOU WERE SHAVED AFTER OR BEFORE?

A Before I went to the water, I was shaved. I had to strip, put away all what I had on my body, examined, then shaved and then I took a cleansing bath. Then I got a Russian uniform.

Q WERE OTHER WOMEN LINED UP WITH YOU?

A Yeah, one after another.

Q YOU WENT THROUGH THE PROCESS?

A Everybody went through this process. And the uniform I got was still full of dry blood and full of lice.

Q SO AFTER YOUR CLEANSING BATH --

A Then we realized we didn't come to life; we

1 came to death. Just to take our energy from us and
2 more -- they knew we won't last more than two or three
3 months after the treatment, after the food they gave
4 us.

5 Q DID YOU REALIZE WHEN THEY ASKED YOU TO GET
6 UNDRESSED AND TOOK YOUR THINGS WHAT WAS HAPPENING TO
7 YOU?

8 A No, I didn't. I was shocked. You don't
9 know what's going on. How can I realize? After a
10 couple of days coming from freedom to such a horror.
11 You don't know what's going on at all. You don't
12 realize nothing.

13 So when I got the Russian uniform, I am small, I
14 got a uniform from a six-foot soldier. It was pants
15 which had -- they wore when they were horse riding:
16 here so wide and a blouse. And nothing underneath.
17 Nothing. No shoes. They gave us those Holland wooden
18 clogs. And I got a spoon and a red bowl for my meals.
19 That's all the outfit what everybody got. No soap, no
20 towel, no nothing. This was the treasure, the spoon
21 and the bowl, I had to guard. It was my treasure,
22 because if I would lose the bowl and spoon I couldn't
23 get any food.

24 Q YOU HAD TO HOLD ONTO IT?

25 A But the bowl served for everything. When

1 you had to go to the bathroom, where are you going to
2 go? You have to line up there in the barrack five
3 hundred for a few toilets? I use the bowl. What
4 could you do? And we were on a bunk four and five.
5 You hardly could sit. Later on, I mean. At this time
6 still we were laying on the floor in the barrack.

7 Q IN THE SAME BARRACKS. SO YOU RETURNED TO
8 THE SAME BARRACKS?

9 A But when the girls who were still in their
10 own clothes and when they saw us coming out from this
11 tent, they started laughing. Nobody recognized us.
12 Absolutely nobody. Because shaved heads, Russian
13 uniforms. Who know who are those strangers? They
14 didn't know who we are.

15 Q THOSE WERE YOUR FRIENDS?

16 A Sure, my friends. But we waved to them and
17 they didn't recognize us. And it took a day and some
18 more until the thousand girls were cleansed. And then
19 when everybody was through, we could go back to the
20 barracks.

21 Q SO WHERE DID YOU GO?

22 A Back to the tent block.

23 Q YOU HAD TO WAIT?

24 A But what happened, after a week another
25 transport came from Slovakia and another and another

1 and they had to go through the same thing. In May --
2 We came in March. In May Auschwitz -- the ten
3 barracks were so full it was forty-seven thousand
4 already there in May from Slovakia. You didn't have
5 in the barracks where to sit. Then they put in bunks,
6 but the bunks didn't help. You didn't have where to
7 stand, where to sit. Constantly the Kapos were
8 beating and screaming and we had to stay in line. At
9 this time we didn't go to work.

10 Q EVERY DAY YOU STOOD IN LINE?

11 A Ten times a day from the barracks to the
12 line-up, to roll call, and again to the barracks. And
13 then we could mingle around in the area outside.
14 Everybody was looking for everybody, for a mother, for
15 a sister. Because later on came not only the young
16 girls, elderly people. I mean, for a sixteen-,
17 eighteen-year-old girl, a twenty-five-year-old or
18 thirty-year-old is a old woman, yes?

19 Q SO THE ORIGINAL GROUP WAS THE YOUNG WOMEN?

20 A Yes, young.

21 Q AND BY MAY THE OLD WOMEN WERE COMING?

22 A Yes, but still singles, not families.

23 Q SO YOU HAD OTHER RELATIVES THEN WHO CAME?

24 A I had cousins, yes. I had quite a few
25 cousins.

1 Q THEY CAME LATER?

2 A They came later

3 Q You recognized --

4 A I recognized them. We searched for each
5 other. Sure, we recognized each other.

6 A lot what they brought along was still in
7 between the barracks. So I had to steal something
8 because I needed food. I was very hungry. For
9 instance, we got in the morning a portion of bread.
10 It was two hundred grams. That was breakfast. Roll
11 call, you got breakfast. Everybody got a slice of
12 bread, two hundred grams, and tea in the morning.
13 Nothing else. The tea was dirty water. I don't know
14 from which side, but it was warm at least and it was
15 water. But you finished the bread, you were so hungry
16 you would chew stalks.

17 The luggage was in the center. And the camp was
18 so full, some people had to sleep outside. I went to
19 the luggage, stealing, and not only me. I stole
20 whatever I could get mine hands on.

21 Q YOU COULD OPEN THE LUGGAGE AND --

22 A By stealing we got it. But it was such
23 commotion and fights. So until they were fighting,
24 the others could steal.

25 Q THIS WAS THE NEW ARRIVALS?

1 A The new arrivals. Then they started to be
2 more coordinated. Everybody had to leave the luggage
3 right away when they stepped out from the cattle car
4 on the ramp.

5 Q SO THEY DIDN'T HAVE TO GO --

6 A No. They started doing better and better
7 every time the S.S. --

8 Q DID YOU FIND FOOD IN THE LUGGAGE?

9 A Not always. But at least you could steal a
10 pair of socks which you didn't have -- I was barefoot
11 -- or a scarf or something to keep you warm. It was
12 still very cold. And you see outside was snowing or
13 raining and freezing. All the things what you had on
14 yourself were stiff from rain and frozen.

15 Q DID THE GUARDS LET YOU KEEP SOMETHING?

16 A Well, the guards -- we hid it under the
17 uniform. You put on a shawl or socks in the clogs, in
18 the wooden clogs. What happened if you lost a wooden
19 clog? You had one foot warm and other was barefoot.
20 They were big. You know, they didn't fit and I didn't
21 know how to use them.

22 Q DID YOU FIND SOMETHING TO STUFF INTO YOUR
23 CLOG?

24 A Well, I found paper and I stuffed in, so I
25 managed anyway. But like I say in May, started coming

1 transports from Holland and France and all to those
2 ten barracks.

3 Q That was 47,000?

4 A It was awful. And in May -- in June
5 already they formed the first groups for working --
6 kommandoes -- working units, I mean. I was assigned
7 to a working unit to go out to work in May on the
8 fields to plant.

9 I remember my first job. I went out with around
10 a hundred fifty other inmates to a field and we had to
11 spread the fertilizer, but we didn't get any shovels.
12 With our hands. And it was manure, on one side a big
13 pile of manure. The S.S. guards already got at us,
14 and with dogs outside in the fields. So can you
15 imagine in those Russian uniforms with the wooden
16 clogs and we had to run to pick up the manure and
17 spread on the field and everybody had to run with it.

18 Q SO QUICKER --

19 A Fast, fast. Can you imagine how to spread
20 the manure and leave your clogs there and you couldn't
21 pick them up. They wouldn't let you, so you had to
22 run barefoot. And there were many stones. You are
23 not used to walk barefoot, and the field was still
24 frozen, so we had wounds everywhere. And on our heads
25 nothing. And dirty, the Russian uniform was dirty --

1 our faces, our hands, and nowhere water to wash our
2 hands.

3 Q AND YOU WERE HAULING MANURE WITH YOUR
4 HANDS?

5 A With our hands. And this was in the
6 morning. It was around five or six o'clock, we were
7 already in the fields, and we went to work from see to
8 not see. In the evening we returned to camp and we
9 had to march on dirt roads, barefoot.

10 Q YOU LEFT YOUR CLOGS ON THE FIELDS?

11 A You couldn't run with the clogs.

12 Q SO YOU --

13 A And the field when it was wet, it sucked in
14 your shoe and you pull out your foot, but the shoe was
15 left in the dirt. And it took about ten or twelve
16 hours and no food. When we came back to the camp,
17 first we had to stay at roll call hours and hours,
18 because until everything was all right for the S.S.
19 that nobody escaped and then they brought out kettles
20 with food outside. And the German Kapo was the one
21 who was handling the food.

22 Q A GERMAN MAN?

23 A No, only women. Only women.

24 Q THE WOMEN WERE GUARDS, TOO?

25 A Women Kapos. No men guards. S.S.

1 Q ONLY WOMEN?

2 A In the women camp only women guards. In
3 the men's camp only men guards. When they started
4 giving us evening meals, warm soup, everybody was so
5 hungry so everybody wanted to be first in line after
6 the roll call. Naturally we lined up, but everybody
7 was pushing because the last one many times didn't get
8 anything, because it was nothing left. So what
9 happened? The kettle fell because we pushed, and she
10 -- the Kapo -- was beating over the head everybody.
11 So no food. You know what we did? We lie down on the
12 floor and we were licking the food.

13 Q YOU WERE LITTLE COMPARED TO OTHERS?

14 A Yes, mostly girls. I was one of the
15 smallest in my barrack. Slovakian girls are strong,
16 big. I was tinier than the rest.

17 Q SO THAT MUST HAVE BEEN HARD FOR YOU, TOO?

18 A Well, I think I had more advantage than
19 them. They were visible always; I wasn't.

20 Q SO YOU COULD GO --

21 A I could -- they always encouraged me to
22 steal for them, because they couldn't. I could get in
23 everywhere.

24 Q YOU COULD FIT IN SMALL PLACES?

25 A Yes, and I did. I did and I learned how to

1 do it. I learned how to survive.

2 Q LEARNED HOW TO SURVIVE?

3 A I'm a survivor.

4 Q YES.

5 A So we were licking the food. But then
6 after an hour again we had to go to the barracks to
7 lie down in the same clothing. In wintertime was
8 frost and bitter cold. In the summertime was such a
9 heat. Unbearable.

10 Q YOU WERE WEARING THE UNIFORMS?

11 A Yes, still wearing our uniform and I tried
12 to escape not to go to work, hiding all around until
13 all the kommandoes were formed and then I could stay
14 inside, so I was cleaning the barracks. And in 1942
15 it was -- must be around August or so, Greek
16 transports started to come to camp from Salonika. At
17 that time I was already working in a very good unit.

18 Q YOU WEREN'T WORKING IN THE FIELD ANYMORE?

19 A Not anymore in the field. I was already an
20 old inmate. I was already longer in camp than others,
21 so I know how to escape from the bad kommandoes.

22 Q YOU WERE WORKING WITH -- YOU WERE ABLE TO

23 --

24 A I was able because I always avoided not to
25 be drafted in this unit because I know what kind of

1 work is there. So I wanted to be inside where I don't
2 have to stay there in the field and not be rushed by
3 the S.S. guard and by the dogs. There were jobs
4 working inside, too. So I got in a special unit and
5 the unit's job was to -- what the people brought along
6 clothing, to sort those clothing. And it was in a
7 special barrack in Auschwitz and it was inside. The
8 girls could steal whatever people brought along from
9 the suitcases, because we had to unpack and sort out
10 everything special: the clothing, the shoes extra,
11 the toothpaste extra. And in one barrack we were
12 sitting and opening the suitcases and you throw the
13 garments to different places: there go the coats,
14 there goes the underwear, and so on. So I got into
15 this unit.

16 Q DO YOU REMEMBER HOW YOU GOT INTO THE UNIT?

17 A I got into the unit just by good strategy,
18 because I was staying behind and this unit was formed
19 later, not right in the beginning when the working
20 kommandoes were formed. And some of my girlfriends
21 were already working there, so they said, you know
22 what, you just stay in camp; we will see that you get
23 in this unit. This way I got in this unit.

24 Q YOU HAD A FRIEND WHO WAS ABLE TO HELP YOU?

25 A Yes. But then later those girls were very

1 careful that not a stranger will come in, only their
2 friends. So we were guarding it. We were clean
3 because there was water, too; we could wash ourselves
4 and we could steal underwear. And inside the barrack
5 we could change our Russian uniforms and wear their
6 overalls.

7 Q DID YOU STILL LIVE IN THE SAME BARRACKS?

8 A Yes.

9 Q DID THE OTHERS KNOW THAT YOU HAD A SPECIAL
10 JOB?

11 A Yes. But I tried every night to bring
12 something for my friends in the shoes, between my
13 legs, under mine arms, here (indicating). Because
14 this time we had no control at the entrance to the
15 camp. We could smuggle in things.

16 Q SO THEY DIDN'T TREAT YOU DIFFERENTLY IN THE
17 BARRACKS?

18 A In the barracks they didn't treat us
19 different. We had to work. But the S.S. guard didn't
20 beat us and didn't rush us. We did our job and it was
21 quiet inside. We had a roof over our head; we had
22 water; we changed our clothes; and we could steal food
23 there. In no time we looked excellent. We were the
24 elite in camp.

25 Q AND YOU HAD BEEN THERE FOR SIX OR EIGHT

1 MONTHS AT THAT POINT?

2 A Yes, I was already in camp about seven
3 months.

4 Q ALREADY SURVIVED WORKING IN THE FIELDS?

5 A Yes. But what happened one day -- this
6 unit later always got more and more people in.
7 Because more and more people came to the camp and they
8 needed more workers because the clothes started to
9 pile up. It was full. We had about ten barracks full
10 of clothing up to the ceiling. We had to work there,
11 so more and more people were brought in.

12 But what happened, when we lined up to work in
13 camp, it was a riot. Everybody wanted to go to work
14 there. And the S.S. guards came and started shooting.
15 And I remember even the name. The S.S. guard's name
16 was Unterschefuehrer Stivitz, and he started shooting.
17 We were five in a row in a line. Everybody pushed and
18 was beating and screaming, pulling out. They kicked
19 me out from line, and another person went in.

20 Q STARTED SHOOTING AT THE PEOPLE WHO WERE --

21 A In line. In this kommando the S.S. started
22 shooting and killed people there. But I was already
23 out from the line, so another S.S. -- not S.S. but
24 this was a German Kapo -- grabbed me and pulled me to
25 another kommando and I marched with this kommando to a

1 place which was called Harmensee. There in this
2 kommando mostly were Jewish girls from Salonika, from
3 Greece.

4 Q THIS WAS --

5 A Seven months after I was in camp.

6 Q FOR ALL OF 19--

7 A No, it was end of August. And when we came
8 to our working place -- we marched I don't know how
9 long, maybe -- It was five kilometers. Later I knew
10 how far it was. This unit was called Canada, the good
11 one, where we were sorting those clothing. I was
12 kicked out from the Canada unit.

13 Q BUT YOU WERE HEALTHY AT THAT POINT?

14 A I was healthy naturally. I was seven
15 months in camp I had food. And those girls, the Greek
16 girls just came from Greece bewildered.

17 Q YOU WERE THE ONLY ONE?

18 A Not only one; there were already more
19 people already longer in camp and they had no chance
20 to get into Canada. In Canada we were only three
21 hundred people from hundred thousands; it's nothing.
22 Three hundred girls there.

23 Q YOU WERE PUSHED OUT?

24 A I was pushed out. And so I marched with
25 this Kapo and I came to the Harmensee. And our job

1 was -- they were building fish hatcheries, and around
2 Auschwitz all the land is -- How you say? Water
3 stays? How you call it?

4 Q WATER IN THE LAND?

5 A Yes, marsh.

6 Q MARSHLAND?

7 A Marshland. And the hatcheries they started
8 to build on this marshland. So our job was -- They,
9 the S.S., wanted to put in squares, cement for fish
10 hatcheries. We had to tear out the grass and standing
11 in water, half in water, no gloves no protection on
12 our hands. The grass in this water is very sharp.
13 It's like knives. We had to tear it out and stones
14 what we found to throw out and prepare the thing for a
15 fish hatchery. There were engineers with pipes
16 building new fish hatcheries.

17 Q THERE WAS A HUNDRED MEN AND HOW MANY WOMEN?

18 A A kommando usually was about a hundred,
19 hundred fifty women. And next to me were standing
20 three girls. And suddenly a Greek girl pulls out a
21 big thing, a round thing, looks at it, and started
22 chewing it.

23 Q SHE STARTED EATING SOMETHING?

24 A She started eating something. But I knew.
25 Because at nighttime from the crematoria trucks came

1 and ashes from the crematoria they throwed in this
2 marshland.

3 Q OH?

4 A They throwed the ashes from the crematoria
5 in this marshland, so I knew about it. She didn't. I
6 was shocked. I started to tear her out the thing. So
7 she was fighting with me. She thought I want to steal
8 it. And I couldn't explain her don't eat it, because
9 she speak only Greek. I told her: Chimney, your
10 mama, your papa. She didn't want to give me the bone,
11 so I pushed her and I tore it out from her hand and I
12 throw it out. And the poor girl started crying. But
13 I said: Listen. One girl spoke a little German.
14 Tell her it might be the bone from her mother.

15 Q SHE HAD NO IDEA?

16 A Absolutely.

17 Q WHEN DO YOU KNOW?

18 A We knew when we started working in this
19 kommando. There were working men Polacks who were
20 already there two years in prison, because this was
21 also -- Auschwitz before we came was also a prison
22 camp for Polacks. It was more or less a jail or
23 something. I don't know what it was. So they were
24 already longer there and they told us. They were
25 working at the crematoria.

1 Q SO YOU WERE THERE A SHORT TIME WHEN YOU
2 KNEW?

3 A I knew.

4 Q AND SAW THESE CHIMNEYS?

5 A But still in Birkenau -- It was only this
6 crematoria, the little one, in Auschwitz. In Birkenau
7 they started building the chimneys only when we came
8 and the builders were the first Slovakian Jews who
9 came to Auschwitz, and my husband was one of the
10 builders. My husband was also three years in camp.
11 He came one month later than me, but we didn't know
12 each other. We met after the war.

13 Q BECAUSE THE MEN AND WOMEN WERE SEPARATED?

14 A Yes. We didn't know each other, only after
15 the war.

16 Q WHEN YOU GOT TO AUSCHWITZ THERE WAS A
17 CHIMNEY ALREADY BUILT?

18 A Yes, but only one. It was only for people
19 who died and they didn't gas. It was no gassing there
20 at this time.

21 Q SO EVENTUALLY YOU FOUND OUT WHAT WAS THE
22 CREMATORIUM?

23 A But I found out also later that when they
24 brought the transports, they were gassing. They had
25 wooden little barracks and they were gassing them all

1 in cars -- vans.

2 Q YOU FOUND OUT WHILE YOU WERE THERE?

3 A Yes. And those people were buried in mass
4 graves close to the camp.

5 Q YOU KNEW WHEN YOU WERE IN THE WATER THAT
6 THAT WAS FROM --

7 A I knew it already from the men that it was
8 ashes. What they brought to Harmensee, they are
9 shipping out the ashes from the crematoria and filling
10 the land there with ashes.

11 Q WITH BONES?

12 A With the bones and ashes.

13 Q DID YOU THINK THEY WERE JUST CREMATING THE
14 PEOPLE WHO HAD ALREADY DIED, THEY WERE --

15 A I knew already that they were shooting
16 people and I saw when we were in the kommando they
17 were killing people.

18 But I didn't finish with what happened at the
19 Harmensee. The little girl was crying. There too who
20 couldn't make it in the water and didn't work right,
21 the S.S. for fun were shooting in the groups on the
22 working place and they shot many girls and then they
23 drowned them there, and we couldn't say a word. But
24 we had to pull them out and when we went back to the
25 camp, we had to take them along. So who was in the

1 end of the group, the line, had to pull those girls by
2 the hands to the camp because we couldn't carry them.
3 We were not able to carry them. Each one had to pull
4 a body, a corpse. Can you imagine, five kilometers
5 pulling those corpses? When we came to the camp they
6 didn't have not only the uniform, not even the skin on
7 their backs. And we had to line them up in front of
8 the barracks so they can count them.

9 Q THE GUARDS MADE YOU PULL THEM --

10 A Absolutely.

11 Q -- AFTER THEY KILLED THEM?

12 A After they killed them. For fun they did
13 it. Because they said: You, you, you are not working
14 so fast. Bend down, pull grass. And you want to
15 straighten out. And then he said, you so-and-so, you
16 don't want to work, you don't like the work? Piff!
17 And you couldn't even cry, because when you did you
18 are the next one. And in this kommando I was maybe
19 three or four times, but I got back.

20 Q YOU STAYED IN FOR A FEW DAYS?

21 A Yes. But what happened this time the
22 working places were something what it was meant for
23 us: killing us, nothing else. And I went back to my
24 kommando.

25 Q HOW DID YOU GET BACK TO YOUR KOMMANDO?

1 A Well, I did shoving and pushing like the
2 others. You know what was in Auschwitz? A jungle.
3 Either you or me. No mercy.

4 Q AND YOU WERE --

5 A But not everybody can do it.

6 Q YOU THINK --

7 A Wild. Wild. You want to live. You are
8 hungry. You want to eat. Where can you eat the best?
9 There. So it was life or death. Be or not to be.
10 Absolutely.

11 Q EVERY DAY DID THEY HAVE THE LINEUP?

12 A Every day. Every day.

13 Q SO EVERY DAY YOU HAD TO PUSH IN TO GET INTO
14 THAT LINE?

15 A Every day. But in the end or beginning of
16 September or end of August, the camp, these barracks
17 were so full nobody could fit in anymore. So one
18 morning again we had to line up and everybody from all
19 ten barracks lined up and we had to march. And we
20 marched to another camp: to Birkenau.

21 Q ALL THESE?

22 A This was still Auschwitz, the main camp
23 where I was. From 1942 March until the end of August
24 -- beginning of September -- I'm not sure exactly.

25 Q THAT'S FINE. IT'S IN THE FALL IT WAS?

1 A In the fall, but it was still very, very
2 hot. And the camp was crowded and the screaming and
3 when you would see those people, their looks, it was
4 just awful. But if you want to live, you had to go
5 on.

6 Q YOU HAD TO MARCH TO BIRKENAU?

7 A Birkenau. It's also around five kilometers
8 from the main camp, from Auschwitz. From Auschwitz
9 through a bridge we; marched where the railroads went
10 through.

11 Q WERE YOU STILL WITH SOME PEOPLE YOU KNEW?

12 A Yes. We were still together with people I
13 knew. We kept together, about seven or eight girls
14 from the same city. We kept together, helped out each
15 other. We marched to Birkenau. We came to Birkenau.
16 We thought Auschwitz was hell. We didn't know what
17 means Birkenau. When we came into Birkenau, those
18 Russian prisoners were living in Birkenau. Birkenau
19 had not even a dirt road. And it started already in
20 September raining. The only thing what was there were
21 stone barracks. When we came there, you had to march
22 and everything was dry and the soil was yellow. How
23 you call this yellow soil? Lame? No. How you call
24 it in English? The soil was yellow?

25 Q IT WAS VERY DRY?

1 A No, the soil was yellow. Clay. Clay.

2 Oh, that's my husband. Already 4:30?

3 I'm not through.

4 Q YEAH. WOULD YOU MIND? YOU CAN TAKE A
5 CHAIR AND WAIT OUTSIDE.

6 A You can wait outside. He wants to listen.
7 It's okay. It doesn't bother me.

8 Q YOU WERE GOING TO BIRKENAU?

9 A We were going to Birkenau.

10 Q THE SOIL WAS VERY DRY?

11 A Very dry. And again we had to go to those
12 barracks. On one side were those stone barracks. The
13 stone barracks were one-story building, very little
14 windows like for cattle, and around alongside the wall
15 were bunks but built only alongside the wall. Three
16 bunks. The lower bunk was dark. The center was a
17 little bit higher, where you could only sit. The
18 third bunk under the roof where you can stand and sit.
19 And the floor was dirt. It was not cement. And the
20 windows were very small, only about four or five on
21 each side. And the entrance to the barracks were two
22 doors, no oven, no electricity. Empty everything.
23 And there we had to go in ten to a bunk, ten people to
24 a bunk.

25 Bare. I was already a little better. I had

1 already underwear from Canada, my working unit. But
2 the girls still wear the Russian uniforms. We never
3 took a bath. It was scarcely water, but in Birkenau
4 there was no water whatsoever. Whatsoever. I don't
5 know how many barracks -- stone barracks -- on the one
6 side; and other side, they were wooden barracks. The
7 wooden barracks looked like barracks for horses: long
8 barracks, not windows, only at the top below the roof
9 little small opening. But those were the luxury
10 barracks, not for Jews, only for Aryans.

11 In this time we already had non-Jewish people
12 there, too, mostly Polacks from Poland which they
13 caught for activity against Germans or from the
14 universities, the rebels. So they were already Polish
15 prisoners and they were assigned to those wooden
16 barracks and we, the dirty Jews, to those doghouses.

17 Q AND THESE WERE ONLY WOMEN AGAIN?

18 A Only women. Men and women in Auschwitz
19 were separated. No way they could be together. Not
20 even Kapos. All work -- everything was done by women
21 in the women's camp and assigned there.

22 And now you had to go to the toilet. It was not
23 a toilet. Behind the barracks were latrines. Two
24 hundred people at once could go. Beside this, there
25 was no water. A kitchen was built end of -- wooden

1 barracks? No, no, of the stone barracks was a kitchen
2 built from bricks. And outside was a pipe and water
3 was just dripping, so if you wanted water you had to
4 go there and you had to have your red bowl.

5 Q YOU STILL HAD YOUR RED BOWL?

6 A Had to have it, otherwise you wouldn't
7 exist there. You waited for water to drip and it was
8 again life and death. Everybody was fighting for the
9 water. I got to the water. And when I got almost
10 half of the bowl with water, my friends were waiting.
11 The Kapo came and kicked the bowl out and I lost the
12 bowl and I lost the water.

13 Q SO IT WAS VERY HARD FOR YOU?

14 A Well, but again, I went back to the
15 barracks. My girlfriends had the bowl, so I had at
16 least the food from them. In Auschwitz you had to
17 have a friend. You had to join with somebody; because
18 when you were in trouble, we helped each other out.
19 That was the main existence, to group, two or three or
20 four together.

21 Q DID YOU HAVE ONE SPECIAL FRIEND OR TWO OR
22 THREE?

23 A I had more: four or five special friends,
24 and they all survived.

25 Q WONDERFUL.

1 A And they still live in Czechoslovakia.

2 Q THEY DO?

3 A Yes. When we came back to the barracks
4 again we had to line up, same thing, the works! And
5 so I managed to get into Canada and I marched from
6 this time always to Canada. It was not later on any
7 more shooting because we guarded each other and nobody
8 could get in. And beside this, the S.S. guard from
9 the Kommando where we were working came to the camp,
10 and we were assigned to special barracks where only
11 those six hundred girls who worked in Canada were
12 living there. So it was no way that I couldn't go to
13 work there.

14 Q SO YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO LINE UP ANYMORE?

15 A No. I had to line up, but it was no
16 shooting and I didn't have to fight for it and I was
17 not afraid that I have to go to work again in the
18 fields or hatcheries. Because later Siemens Werke and
19 IG Farber Industries built big factories. Tens of
20 thousands worked in the factories. But it was also
21 very, very hard labor there. Twelve hours, ten hours
22 at the machines and the food was very scarce, but you
23 had to work there. But also they got uniforms,
24 striped uniforms. And they could take a bath, because
25 at these factories were civilians working, too. You

1 know, how you say, masters and they showed the girls
2 how to work, they didn't want to work with prisoners
3 who were mistreated, full of lice, and smelled.

4 Q SO THEY ALLOWED THEM TAKE BATHS AND--

5 A They allowed to take baths and they marched
6 there to work. It was already a little improvement.

7 Q DID THEY ALLOW TO YOU TAKE BATHS AT THAT
8 TIME?

9 A At this time we had from 1942 to the end of
10 1944, they didn't allow us to take a bath. There was
11 no water. They didn't install water pipes.

12 Q SO BIRKENAU HAD NO WATER?

13 A Had no water, no, no; didn't have any
14 water. When you came from work, you had to go -- In
15 the middle of the barrack was standing a big bucket.
16 You had to use this bucket, but who had to empty it in
17 the morning? They had girls who were housecleaners
18 kind of. So it was their job to empty the buckets so
19 the girls can use them. But you could go to the
20 latrine, too, but it was about three hundred feet to
21 the latrine, end of the barracks at the fence -- at
22 the electric fence and guards all around and you had
23 to sit on the latrine. But it was so many people at
24 this latrine, again everybody needed to go and we
25 didn't have water. But when it was raining so we find

1 water. Your foot was sucked into the soil in this --
2 Clay. I don't know the term.

3 Q THAT TYPE OF SOIL LIKE QUICKSAND?

4 A Yes. And it left an opening so the rain
5 left the water there so you can use this water for
6 washing.

7 Q YOU COULD WASH WITH THAT?

8 A It was raining. If it was raining, water
9 disappeared very fast anyway. But where I was
10 working, I had water and I had food, so for me it was
11 not so important. But to go to the latrine, it was
12 murder. Again the Kapos, the S.S. Kapos, you know
13 what they did? They screamed: Only one minute you
14 can stay! So they pushed and they drowned many people
15 in the waste there. And we had to pull them out
16 because when it was roll call --

17 Q THEY HAD TO COUNT THEM?

18 A -- they had to count them. Could you
19 imagine how people lost their lives?

20 Q DID YOU STILL HAVE YOUR CLOGS AT THAT POINT
21 WHEN YOU WERE WALKING TO THE LATRINE?

22 A No. I had already shoes this time, because
23 from the workplace the S.S. guard allowed us that we
24 can use the shoes. You know what? We had to pair the
25 shoes. Because one girl was pairing shoes, one girl

1 was putting together all kinds of different clothing.
2 So when we don't find a pair we could use them, each
3 shoe was different but they were shoes.

4 Q WAS IT EASIER FOR YOU TO WALK THEN?

5 A Absolutely. Absolutely. We had already
6 shoes, I had underwear, and when it was cold I wore
7 warm things underneath. But I had already a striped
8 uniform. They requested, the S.S, that we should wear
9 striped uniforms and all these Russian dirty and torn
10 things were exchanged.

11 Q THIS WAS BY 1943?

12 A It was still 1942. In 1942 we
13 experienced coming in all Europe. I will start:
14 Czechoslovakia, Poland, Belgium, France, the Greek
15 girls; some came from Italy, Yugoslavia, Romania,
16 Bulgaria. So you name it. The whole world was there,
17 whole Europe was there.

18 Q YOU SAW THEM COME IN BIRKENAU, TOO?

19 A Yes. Because I was working there. Later
20 on we were working in a special barrack in a special
21 camp and the train came all the way to the working
22 place. So the people on the ramp, when they jumped
23 out, lined up. It was a selection. And all their
24 belongings were left there and we saw how people went
25 one line to the crematorium, the other line to camp.

1 They started building four crematoriums. My husband
2 was building one of them, too. So on each side our
3 working place were two. One, two, three, four,
4 besides in Auschwitz was the fifth. But those
5 crematoria already had gas chambers. They were
6 factories of death. People who came in never left,
7 never went out. Only the chimneys were burning. Day
8 and night. We were working in between. From the
9 chimneys the ashes and the fat thing was falling
10 always down on us, and we were always black just from
11 the grease. Day and night and day and night you felt
12 like somebody is making a barbecue, burning flesh.

13 Q DO YOU REMEMBER AS SOON AS YOU GOT IN THIS
14 POSITION IN BIRKENAU SEEING THE CREMATORIA AND SEEING
15 THE PEOPLE BEING SEPARATED?

16 A Sure, we saw it. Right after the people
17 were separated in 1942 when the big transports started
18 coming. My parents left two months later than me with
19 my oldest brother, who was ten years older than me,
20 and other brothers. And they went straight to the gas
21 chambers. All the whole family.

22 Q DO YOU KNOW IF THEY WENT TO BIRKENAU OR YOU
23 DON'T KNOW?

24 A I just know that the whole transport from
25 1942 -- in it was March, June -- It was in July.

1 Q SO THE WOMEN THAT CAME -- YOU WERE THERE IN
2 MARCH IN AUSCHWITZ, THE WOMEN THEY CAME IN APRIL AND
3 MAY, YOUR MOTHER WASN'T IN THAT GROUP?

4 A No, no, they were not gassed. Those
5 transports -- all of the transports came into the
6 camp, but we had every Sunday selections. Those girls
7 who were in camp and disabled or just under mercy of
8 S.S. They selected by random: You, you, you, and
9 you, out. There came the truck; had to jump up and
10 straight to the gas chambers.

11 Q THAT WAS IN AUSCHWITZ?

12 A In Auschwitz, yes, and not early. It was
13 maybe seven, eight months later.

14 Q BUT YOU DID FIND OUT THAT YOUR PARENTS --

15 A Yes. Because I find out later other
16 transports who came, ten percent came to the camp; the
17 rest went straight to the gas chamber that these were
18 destroyed, all. Nobody is alive from there, so I knew
19 they were in these transports, butchered in the gas
20 chamber.

21 Q IT WAS A FEW MONTHS AFTER?

22 A Yeah, about two or three months after.
23 This time they didn't gas in the gas chamber. Only
24 outside in those barracks or trucks or whatever. They
25 had vents, I would say, more or less; with the

1 exhaustion they killed them.

2 The first gassing in the crematorium -- You know
3 who were the first who were gassed in the crematorium?
4 Those kommandoes who built the crematoria. Those boys
5 were the first victims of the gas chambers.

6 Q YOU FOUND THAT OUT LATER?

7 A We knew it, not we find it out. Where I
8 was working in our kommando, the clothing came in. We
9 had a special chamber where they were putting gas
10 because of lice or I don't know why. It all had to be
11 disinfected, so they use the Zyklon B. One evening
12 before we left work, the Sonderkommando marched in.
13 Because the crematoria -- they didn't gas them in
14 there in the gas chamber, but they brought them over
15 to the Bekleidungskammer where I was working. It was
16 a unit, sixty men, young men. They were not even
17 thirty, because only young men were assigned to do
18 this kind of work. They brought them in when we were
19 leaving from work. And you know how we knew? Because
20 in the morning there was no clothing there.

21 Q OH.

22 A And there were working also Polacks. The
23 Polacks were not gassed. They were treated better
24 from us and they told us: You know who was gassed
25 last night here? Did you saw marching a whole unit

1 when you left to this side men? They were gassed and
2 burned in the gas chamber in Birkenau.

3 And it was already 1943. I was already a year in
4 camp. And one day Birkenau was crowded full with
5 prisoners, two hundred or three hundred thousand. The
6 barracks were full. They did a big selection. That
7 was the first big selection in the camp. We had to
8 leave the camp, the barrack. We couldn't go to work.
9 And outside behind the fence, the electric fence, was
10 a big place in front of the S.S. barracks. Empty
11 place, no trees. Nothing, just empty. So the whole
12 camp had to go out. We were there the whole day. And
13 then --

14 Q HOW MANY PEOPLE?

15 A Oh, two hundred, three hundred thousand
16 people. Women only. I'm talking always only about
17 women. Men were separated. In the evening we had to
18 march back to the camp. But then was the big
19 selection. We marched in. A group of S.S. on one
20 side by the gate; on the other side the inmates. And
21 they looked at everybody and they said, like the
22 selection at the ramp: one here, one here, one here,
23 one there, twenty there. There they selected healthy
24 people on the other side and the same night they
25 gassed them all. We were in the barrack around a

1 thousand. When we came to the barrack after the
2 selection, when they let us in, we were not even
3 twenty. They all were killed.

4 Q NINE HUNDRED EIGHTY?

5 A From the women's camp were killed three
6 hundred thousand. I don't know if fifty thousand were
7 alive. Because they expected new transports and it
8 was no room there. And then what happened to me.

9 Q YOU WERE HEALTHY AT THAT POINT?

10 A I have still marks. I had holes in my legs
11 because of malnutrition, avitaminosis. So I started
12 to have infections all over my legs, both legs. But
13 we had to strip so, you know what I did? I saw what
14 they are looking at. I took dirt and I smeared on my
15 legs. Otherwise I would end up in the gas chamber.
16 And I smeared out all my wounds on one side and the
17 other side, so I didn't go to the gas chamber.

18 Q SO YOU COULD LOOK HEALTHY?

19 A Well, in the face I looked okay, but I had
20 wounds still. Everybody had. See here the big hole?
21 (Indicating on leg.) This didn't heal for months and
22 months. No medication and it was infected and
23 infected and infected. And at one place I cleaned it
24 up. I put in some gauze, but it wouldn't heal.
25 Months and months.

1 Q YOU HAD TO WALK AS IF IT WASN'T INFECTED?

2 A I had to go on. And I had typhoid in camp
3 but my girls, my friends they took me along and they
4 schlepped me.

5 Q AND THEY HELD YOU UP?

6 A They held me up. And they worked and did
7 what I was supposed to do. They did it for me,
8 otherwise I wouldn't survive. And vice versa; we
9 helped each other. I tell you, everybody who survived
10 is pure, pure luck. Nothing else. Because many times
11 the healthiest girls just were taken to the gas
12 chambers.

13 I have to tell you, when I was in 1964 in
14 Czechoslovakia -- I can't go back; I have to talk
15 chronological. Okay?

16 Q COME BACK TO 1943.

17 A In 1943 they called it the big Entlausung.
18 Entlausung means delousing. The German term is
19 "Entlausung." So after the Entlausung, everybody was
20 gone. I had cousins there. All disappeared. But I
21 still had two cousins left. They were still working
22 outside in the fields. And I couldn't get them into
23 mine working place because only when somebody was sick
24 you get another replacement. But everybody had
25 somebody. Everybody had somebody.

1 Q EVEN THOUGH THOSE WOMEN --

2 A Were working there, yes. She survived,
3 too, the big Entlausung, but afterwards she got sick.

4 Q YOUR COUSIN?

5 A My cousin. I brought her always from the
6 working place food and I brought her warm clothes and
7 everything, but she got sick. And in the camp, in the
8 stone barracks, was a special barrack called Barrack
9 25. When somebody was sick or half sick and couldn't
10 make it, the Kapo put them in Block 25. That was that
11 barrack of waiting. How do you say? I know only in
12 German. When I go back and talk so much, my brain
13 thinks in different languages.

14 Q IT WAS A SICK --

15 A The Barrack 25 was a barrack, a Wartesaal
16 for the crematorium. They had to have thousands
17 people for one can of Zyklon B. So they pushed the
18 undernourished to this barrack, people who came from
19 work and they were injured or were sick or had
20 diarrhea. And they pulled them and pushed them into
21 Barrack 25. Sometimes they had to wait there a day,
22 two or three until they were taken to the gas chamber.
23 It was a Wartesaal. I don't know the term in English
24 to tell you that.

25 Q THEY WERE GOING TO DIE? THEY ARE WAITING?

1 A Waiting for being a thousand so they can
2 take them to the gas chamber.

3 Q THEY NEEDED A CERTAIN NUMBER?

4 A One day returning to camp from work, my
5 cousin was on Block 25.

6 Q AND YOU KNEW?

7 A Her sister, my other cousin, was there and
8 she was waiting for me. She said, Libusha , do
9 something. Look, she is there and she is going to
10 die. You know what her only problem was? Her feet.
11 She had full of water in her feet. It's all
12 malnutrition. She was swollen; couldn't see her eyes.
13 Her Russian uniform was pumped; she looked like a
14 balloon. I cut her clothing because it pressed
15 against her water. So they took her to this barrack.
16 I went there to the barrack and next thing I told the
17 Kapo there: Listen, I'm going to bring you whatever
18 you want, because I could steal there at work. In the
19 barrack we were sorting every garment we had to go
20 through to see if something is hidden and removed.
21 And in the middle of the barrack we had a big wooden
22 box where we had to throw in everything what we found.
23 I said I'm going to steal and I told the Block leader:
24 You know what? I'm going to bring you tomorrow
25 whatever you want; please see that they won't take her

1 to the gas chamber, and somehow smuggle her out. She
2 kicked me and she said, "When you open your mouth I'm
3 going to call the S.S. guard and you shall go with
4 her." And this poor girl was knocking this little
5 opening, "Please take me out, take me out." And we
6 couldn't save her. And two weeks later they took her
7 sister, too.

8 Q BUT THEY DIDN'T TAKE YOU?

9 A No. I was working in Canada. I was in a
10 special unit. I was looking already okay.

11 Q HER SISTER GOT SICK, TOO?

12 A Yes, and two weeks later -- It was in 1943.
13 They took her there to Block 25. In 1943, '44 I was
14 working in this special unit. Transports from all
15 over were coming. But in 1944 on May 15 they told us
16 we had to make room, we had to clean out the barracks,
17 and they moved us directly close to the crematorium.
18 Special barracks were built, because they expected
19 five hundred thousands Jews from Hungary. They moved
20 the whole barracks, and those girls who worked in this
21 special unit, close by where the trains stopped so
22 they can drop their luggage right there so they didn't
23 have to bring it in with trucks from the station. The
24 train came directly there to the gas chamber. On one
25 side was the gas chamber. About fifty feet from the

1 gas chamber was our working unit, where we had to
2 live, too; two barracks for those six hundred girls.

3 Q SO YOU LIVED RIGHT THERE?

4 A We were moved from the camp where the rest
5 of the inmates were and were separated from them. And
6 we were living actually where our working place was.
7 Two barracks where we were living, and the rest of
8 twenty barracks were full of clothing. The 15th of
9 May, the first transport from Hungary arrived. And
10 you would see this time in front of the four gas
11 chambers lines waiting for their death.

12 Q YOU COULD SEE THEM?

13 A Sure, because we were working there. Only
14 barbed wire separated us from the gas chambers.

15 Q OUTSIDE?

16 A We were working outside and inside but we
17 had to go outside from barrack to barrack. So they
18 were lined up from the train station or from the
19 ramps, those who were selected. And from the
20 Hungarian transport mostly all of them went to the gas
21 chamber. Lined up, it was May and very hot. Around
22 the gas chamber, very neatly everything landscaped.
23 Flowers were growing, and those poor people were
24 waiting hours and hours for their turn.

25 Q THEY DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WAS HAPPENING?

1 A They didn't know. And we couldn't tell
2 them. They saw us working there. We were in those
3 overalls and shirt, and we looked good. Our hair
4 already grewed; they didn't shaved that. So we looked
5 civilians, normal.

6 Q DO YOU THINK THEY ALLOWED YOU TO LOOK GOOD
7 SO THAT THEY --

8 A They didn't allow us but they needed us.
9 They told us five minutes before twelve, you are going
10 to go here, pointed the chimney. You know where you
11 are going to go? Right here. You don't have far
12 away. So we knew we never would survive this hell.
13 First of all, we knew too much. We saw the transports
14 arriving, the clothing and everything. And besides
15 the clothing we had to clean them after we took them
16 out from the luggage, examined every piece of
17 clothing, even the toothpaste, the shoes. Because you
18 have no idea what treasures people brought with them.
19 You have no idea.

20 Q HID IN THEIR CLOTHES?

21 A Sure. Everybody at this time knew already
22 something is going on and everybody thought if I have
23 valuables I might buy myself out or buy myself food or
24 save my life. I was there three years working at this
25 place so I know.

1 And it was May, neatly around the crematorium,
2 clean, grass, flowers and the crematorium was a brick
3 building. It looked like factories, beautiful. The
4 people had no idea they are going to their death.
5 Children were jumping around, and naturally when you
6 stay in this heat they take away everything from you,
7 only your clothing on, the children are thirsty and
8 the people are thirsty. So the children were jumping
9 around screaming in Hungarian, "Wieset, Wieset,"
10 water, water. I speak Hungarian, too. And I couldn't
11 resist. I took a bottle of water and threw it over
12 the fence. The child run after the water. And a S.S.
13 spotted this. He run after the child. He caught the
14 child and he tossed the child in the air and picked it
15 up on his bayonette.

16 I was in the year 1987 in Germany. This S.S. was
17 caught in Germany and I was a eyewitness at court.
18 '87, two years ago, and he was sentenced for life in
19 prison. But this murderer. I want to tell you about
20 him, what he did. The cruelty of the cruelest. He
21 was at this time maybe twenty-four or twenty-two. He
22 is now seventy, when I was at the trial in Germany, so
23 I saw him. And besides this his specialty was not in
24 the women's camp, in the men's camp. He had the
25 younger boys walking in the middle of the Lagerstrasse

1 where everybody was standing on the road in the front
2 of the barracks. "Lagerstrasse," it means, "Lager,"
3 the main road.

4 And the boy or the person had to put up a empty
5 can on his head, and he was shooting. He shot and he
6 didn't shot him, he had to pick up the can. When he
7 shot him in the forehead and he was bleeding, he had
8 still to pick up the can. Until he couldn't move, he
9 had to get up and put it up. And when he was dead, he
10 put his boot on him and still kept shooting. They
11 called him Wilhem Tell of Auschwitz. You know who
12 Wilhem Tell was?

13 He had only one eye. He came to Auschwitz in 1943
14 as a guard, a promotion. He was on the front, the
15 Russian front, and he lost a eye. A promotion he got
16 to be a guard in Auschwitz killing Jews. You know
17 those guards? They could steal there what the people
18 brought along, they could do with us whatever they
19 wanted, and those were trained sadists.

20 Q YOU SAW HIM DO THIS?

21 A Yes. And then they called me and I was a
22 witness at his trial. I was twice giving testimony:
23 once in Vienna I testified against two S.S. guards.
24 They were not sentenced to death. But he (Wilhem
25 Tell) was sentenced to life in prison in '87.

1 Q DID THEY KNOW WHERE THE WATER CAME FROM
2 THAT WAS THROWN?

3 A Pardon me?

4 Q DID ANYONE KNOW YOU THREW THE WATER OUT TO
5 HELP THE CHILD?

6 A Yes. What happened then, the
7 Lagerkommandant at this time was S.S. Officer Moll.
8 He came to our working place screaming: Who threw the
9 water? Nobody said a word. We knew we are going to
10 die anyway, so what. Nobody talked. If you are not
11 going to say who did it, every tenth is going to be
12 shot. Nobody said a word. Every tenth was shot. I
13 was not the tenth.

14 Q SO THAT'S ANOTHER TIME THAT IT WAS JUST
15 LUCK?

16 A I tell you, it's pure luck, nothing else.
17 And you know the feeling of being dead?

18 Q AGAIN YOU WORKED FOR WITH THEM FOR A LONG
19 TIME?

20 A With whom?

21 Q ALL THE WOMEN.

22 A We worked together a long time, yes. We
23 know each other. We knew there is no way out. You go
24 on living. You eat. You go from the working place to
25 sleep, twelve-hour work, two shifts, from the barracks

1 to work. And besides, you thought you are not alive,
2 anyway. You felt like death. You were living, you
3 were not living. You were just surviving day by day.
4 And I thought I am in hell anyway. There is one
5 chimney, there is another person, not me; people
6 standing in line.

7 Q THERE WAS NO WAY OUT?

8 A (Shakes head.) Absolutely no way out. No
9 way out. And Hungarian transports were coming, five
10 hundred thousand in three months. Twenty thousand
11 daily killed. Even more waiting in line, not knowing
12 what is in front. They throw out the corpses from the
13 gas chambers. The ovens were not able to burn them,
14 so they burned them outside the crematoria in piles.
15 And besides every death, they had to examine. They
16 tore from their mouths out the gold teeth.

17 From Slovakia two men survived from the
18 Sonderkommando. They were testifying too. I don't
19 know who was caught, who was there when they had to
20 melt gold and roots were sent to Germany, everything.
21 Treasures. I tell you, billions what we found only.

22 Q WHEN YOU SAID YOU FOUND DIFFERENT TYPES OF
23 AMAZING THINGS, WHAT TYPES OF THINGS DID YOU FIND?

24 A Coins, gold coins. Hard currency. Dollars
25 in hundred-dollar bills. I found five hundred

1 dollars. Diamonds. Gold. Foreign currency. And,
2 you know, in Auschwitz they falsified dollars, all
3 kinds of currencies, too.

4 Besides this there was a block, the same block
5 in Auschwitz where we were housed at arrival in 1942,
6 was on Block 10, where they made all kinds of
7 experiments -- Dr. Klauberg -- on women. They made --
8 I don't know the term. I'm so excited, I tell you, I
9 hardly know how to talk. I don't know if I'm now in
10 Auschwitz or I'm here in a free country.

11 Q YOU ARE HERE.

12 A Because you go back in time, you feel like
13 you are dead. I can see vividly everything like it
14 would happen yesterday!

15 Q YOU ARE EXPLAINING IT VERY WELL.

16 A Well, I try, but I miss words because I'm
17 so excited and I think the same time in three or four
18 languages.

19 Dr. Klauberg did on people --

20 Q EXPERIMENTS?

21 A Yes. He made -- It was a laboratory where
22 he operated on people in all kinds of -- Yeah,
23 experiment block. It's here (slapping forehead).

24 Q OKAY?

25 A The experiment block. Dr. Klauberg. He

1 was sentenced in Nuremberg. Block 10. So they picked
2 up girls who came from transports, strong, and they
3 made all kinds of experiments on them. They tried to
4 infect them with bacteria and observed the result.
5 They froze them how long a person can be freezed.
6 They dipped them in cold water. You have no idea.

7 Q DID YOU HEAR THOSE STORIES WHEN YOU WERE IN
8 AUSCHWITZ?

9 A Absolutely.

10 Q YOU KNEW IT WAS HAPPENING?

11 A I knew in Auschwitz everything was
12 happening. I was one of the oldest inmates in
13 Auschwitz. Three years there being so you knew about
14 everything. And how many from these thousands of us
15 survived? Not even twenty. So we already pushed our
16 way through to work at places where we didn't have to
17 go outside to the fields.

18 Yes, with the Hungarian transports it was already
19 '44, we heard -- We knew when Stalingrad fell. We had
20 a problem, because when they had kickbacks on the
21 front somewhere, we were the victims again, so they
22 took it out on us. Besides the horror what we
23 experienced, more came when they were losing on the
24 battlefields.

25 Q DID YOU FIND YOU GOT THE NEWS FROM OUTSIDE

1 BECAUSE OF THE TRANSPORTS COMING IN? HOW WOULD YOU
2 FIND OUT?

3 A News -- we find out from the new arrivals
4 what's going on. Stalingrad fell. The war won't take
5 long; it will be over in no time.

6 Q DID YOU HEAR THEM TALKING?

7 A No, I talked to them, because they came --
8 some of them came to the camp, not many of them, but
9 they came to the camp. We could talk to them, so we
10 know what's going on because every day some transport
11 came either from -- I don't know from which part of
12 Europe, but they kept coming and coming, so we knew
13 what's going on.

14 Q DID YOU GET TO GO BACK TO THE MAIN PART OF
15 THE CAMP? THE PART OF THE CAMP THAT YOU LIVED AT WAS
16 RIGHT NEAR THE TRAIN STOPPED WHERE THE CREMATORIUMS
17 WERE?

18 A Yes, but the crematoriums, when the war was
19 over, before even, they were destroyed and the
20 barracks, too. Nowadays only a few -- The wooden
21 barracks don't exist anymore, only the stone barracks
22 are still there and you can see the latrine, too, and
23 the crematorium in Auschwitz, the first camp where we
24 arrived. It's still there. The barracks are there,
25 and they changed them to museums.

1 Q THE FIRST CREMATORIUM YOU SAW THE FIRST
2 DAY?

3 A It's still there and "Arbeit macht Frei" is
4 there and the fence is there. In Birkenau everything
5 is destroyed and the Polacks did a lousy job. I tell
6 you one thing: When we were in camp, the Polacks who
7 were in the camp too, we still were the underdogs.
8 Biggest anti-Semites, in the world, the Polacks are
9 the biggest.

10 Q SO THEY TREATED POLACK JEWS DIFFERENT OR --

11 A All Jews the same way. For them is a Jew
12 is a Jew is a Jew. No difference. Even now. No Jews
13 are in Poland today. I just read an article. I will
14 write a comment to it and I will publish it. Did you
15 read it? It was in "The Chronicle" in June. A group
16 of Holland Jews and Christians came to Auschwitz to
17 see the former camp. And they went -- I was so
18 excited. They went to the place, to the fish hatchery
19 where I was working. And the Polacks are fishing
20 there around. And so I got so excited. And the group
21 was protesting that this fish hatchery -- those are
22 human ashes there, so they shouldn't do it. So the
23 Polish government apologized, said they will stop it.
24 I got so excited, I wrote an article and I'm going to
25 publish it now. I wrote the whole thing; I went

1 through there with the Greek girl.

2 Q GOOD. THAT STORY IS AN IMPORTANT STORY.
3 AT THIS POINT THE HUNGARIAN JEWS WERE COMING THROUGH?

4 A The Hungarian Jews were coming through and
5 only a fraction came to the camp and it went on in
6 May, June, July, August.

7 Q 1944?

8 A '44.

9 Q '44?

10 A '44. In September they stopped gassing
11 because the Hungarian transports stopped and besides
12 it was a group in the crematorium in Birkenau who were
13 collecting gunpowder. They wanted to destroy the
14 crematorium. And the group which worked in the
15 crematorium was called the Sonderkommando. And in
16 1944, it was beginning of August one day, I was in the
17 night shift working. The Sonderkommand blew up the
18 crematorium.

19 Q THE SONDERKOMMANDO?

20 A Yeah.

21 Q IT WAS RIGHT NEAR YOU?

22 A Few meters -- not far away. In the
23 kommando were about sixty boys, young men, I would
24 say. They started to run and they came, some of them
25 came over to the place I was working in. And they

1 were hiding, three or four, in the clothing in the
2 barracks. The barracks were so full up to the ceiling
3 and I would say, about forty barracks, clothing from a
4 couple million people -- from three hundred thousands,
5 at any time. Everybody brought something.

6 So they digged themselves in the clothing. The
7 S.S. came with the dogs and started searching. And
8 they found the two boys and they pulled them out.
9 First of all, we had to leave the barrack and they
10 searched our barracks said we are hiding them, we are
11 going to kill you. We didn't even make a sound, just
12 standing there. So the S.S. found them and they
13 pulled them out and started beating them there in
14 front of us. They throwed them on the floor and were
15 treating them awful. Those two S.S. who did that, I
16 saw it, I remember their names. They were Viennese
17 S.S. guards.

18 In 1964 Erik Kulka, he lives in Jerusalem and he
19 works for the Hebrew Academy of Science, my very good
20 friend; we know each other before the war. He brought
21 in 1964 when I was living in Czechoslovakia pictures
22 to identify, pictures from the ramp where the train
23 stopped and the selection went on by the S.S. guards,
24 and I had recognized those and I said they are
25 Viennese and they live in Vienna. So he went with

1 this to Simon Wiesenthal. Simon Wiesenthal at this
2 time had only a little office in Vienna and he
3 reported them. And in 1969 I went to their trial as a
4 witness.

5 Q TO TESTIFY?

6 A Testify against them what they did. But
7 you know, they laughed at me. Sure, they're
8 Austrians.

9 Q THAT WAS IN AUSTRIA THEY WERE?

10 A They were the same like the Polacks: big
11 anti-Semites. They didn't go to jail even for one
12 day, nothing. But what millions they brought along
13 home from Auschwitz. They were guards at mine working
14 place. And they took everything -- gold, clothing --
15 to Vienna. It's not so far away; with the train, ten
16 hours. And he was in Vienna. And he took home a
17 fortune. He had ten lawyers. Sure, they got them
18 free. That was my first time in court. I'm going one
19 day to write what I testified against them.

20 But they caught those two boys. They were the
21 ones who were beating them and they killed them there
22 in front of us. I saw them killing.

23 Q DO YOU REMEMBER THEIR NAMES?

24 A Absolutely, yes! They were three years
25 there, our guards, so I remember them. The two boys

1 they killed and they caught the rest all from the
2 Sonderkommando. They shot them there in front of us
3 in the front yard.

4 Q THEY HAD EVERYBODY FROM THE CAMP OUT?

5 A We were standing on roll call. We didn't
6 have to stay; we couldn't move. We couldn't go to the
7 barracks. We had to stay in front of the barracks, so
8 we heard it. We didn't see it because it was not far
9 way from us, but we couldn't go to the fence and watch
10 it. So this was the two S.S. guards who were there.

11 Then Wilhem Tell was the second one. They
12 caught him, too, after the war. He went back to his
13 own town in Wupertahl in Germany and he lived there
14 freely forty years.

15 Q WILHEM TELL?

16 A Yes, and a big millionaire because what he
17 brought from Auschwitz. And he was a contractor. But
18 we got him.

19 Q YEAH, YOU WERE ABLE TO TESTIFY?

20 A Even after so many years.

21 Q HE WAS IDENTIFIABLE BECAUSE OF THE EYE?

22 A I saw resemblance but forty years, a person
23 changes.

24 Q VERY HARD?

25 A Very hard. But he was sitting -- I was on

1 the witness stand and he was sitting next to me. But
2 anyway at least one I got.

3 Q WHEN THEY BLEW UP THE CREMATORIA --

4 A They shot the whole Sonderkommando and the
5 two boys I saw killing by Wunsch and Groff and then,
6 what I want to say, no more transports came and it was
7 no more gassing. The gas Kammers stopped. This was
8 already end of '44. Yeah, end of '44. So no more
9 transports. They brought in transports here and there
10 a couple people which they caught, but not masses like
11 they did before. We were still working there, the
12 same treatment, the same thing, working and living in
13 the shadow of the crematoria.

14 Then on January '45, 18th of January '45 also
15 unexpected, we knew the Russians are very close
16 because we heard the Kartusches. It was only fifty
17 kilometers from our camp Katovice, and the Russians
18 were already in Katovice. The S.S. guards told us:
19 You are never going to leave here this place. We kill
20 you before anything happens. But they didn't have
21 time. We had to line up and the rest of the camp
22 lined up and we started to mingle between the other
23 inmates. We didn't want to be separated, because they
24 could kill us right there on the way. We mingled into
25 the rest of hundreds of thousands from Auschwitz and

1 Birkenau and neighboring camps where people were and
2 we marched the camp toward Berlin.

3 Q (Unintelligible question.)

4 A Yes. So we had to line up, and march
5 through the mountains, because the Russian front got
6 closer and they needed the working force in Germany
7 for their factories. The allied forces bombarded
8 them. The Russians bombarded their air fields so we
9 had to clean up. They needed us for forced labor.
10 But it was cold and winter. Snow was two meters high.
11 We marched to the mountains. They were the Carpathian
12 mountains, not through the villages but through the
13 mountains.

14 The first rows had to go and step in the snow.
15 But again, you couldn't take nothing from the camp.
16 We, the six hundred who were in Canada, we put on good
17 shoes, three or four pairs of socks, and sweaters and
18 warm clothing. But the poor people from the camp had
19 only the striped uniforms or Russian uniforms and no
20 shoes, only wooden. Whoever couldn't walk fast and
21 couldn't make it was shot on the spot. S.S. guards
22 were on both sides. Some of them went on horses and
23 some of them by foot guarding us. And who stepped out
24 of line in the snow was shot immediately. Who was in
25 the last line, it was paved with bodies. And we

1 walked in this snow three or four days. No water, but
2 it was lucky that we had snow. But no food, nothing.
3 We slept outside on the snow. We rested, slept, three
4 or four hours. And then we marched and marched until
5 we got to Loslow Oberschlesien. And there they put us
6 in open cattle cars. But the Russian front got
7 closer. They had already a lot of German soldiers --
8 POW -- coming back from the Russian front and from
9 Poland. So we were standing on a deck aside and
10 waiting till they can take us further. But we were a
11 hundred in one open cattle car. No water, frozen to
12 death, and hungry. Who was frozen and died, we throw
13 them over the bars. We took their shoes -- everything
14 what was usable and threw them over. Finally after a
15 week we came to Ravensbruck. That's also close in the
16 motherland.

17 Q THE TRAIN DID START MOVING?

18 A Yes, but stopped and the soldiers the right
19 of way went home and nothing to eat. Only the snow
20 what we ate. But the snow helped, if it would be hot,
21 nobody would survived. The snow helped us. Until we
22 got to Ravensbruck only half of us survived; the
23 others froze to death and they died. And when we came
24 to Ravensbruck, the camp was full of inmates from
25 other camps which they took from the occupied places.

1 We were outside, not anywhere to sit down. I was in
2 this camp maybe a week or two walking around the camp.
3 I thought that's the last day. Suddenly again two big
4 trucks came and they said: Out, we're going to
5 another camp. I said what can I lose? Let's go to my
6 death now. And we went to a Jugendlager and there was
7 not far away a airfield.

8 Q DID EVERYONE GO OR JUST SOME PEOPLE?

9 A No, some people went. I said what can I
10 lose? I'm going to die anyway; I'm so hungry; let me
11 die today. I thought they are taking us to the gas
12 chamber or they will shoot us somewhere. So they
13 didn't. And we came to clean an airfield, because it
14 was so bombarded. And the German planes had to start.
15 We had to fill the holes there and work so the planes
16 can go. We got food and we got potatoes and we got
17 some hot soup, so it was excellent.

18 Q SO YOU GOT FED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A
19 WEEK?

20 A I got fed. Oh, more than a week. Two or
21 three weeks we didn't eat. We were fed and then I got
22 again a good job. It was a S.S. kitchen and I got
23 into the S.S. kitchen peeling potatoes, so I didn't
24 work outside and I had more to eat than the rest. I
25 worked there until again the Russians -- that was in

1 Germany -- until the Russian front came closer and
2 then they took us again deeper into Germany and we
3 marched to New Brandenburg. It was already May. It
4 was warm. And when we came -- I don't know how long
5 we walked but in the meantime the S.S. were far away.
6 And our group, ten girls, we said there is another
7 road and we saw there it must be a big farm or
8 something so we looked around; let everybody be
9 careful. Two were watching one from one side, one the
10 other. And slowly one and one at a time went to the
11 other road. We went to this farm, the ten of us, and
12 the rest were marching to work and really we came to
13 the farm. Nobody was there. There was one barn full
14 of hay. So we crawled in and we stood there
15 overnight. In the morning we got up in straw and it
16 was warm outside; it was May. One girl said: I see
17 there on the road some tanks are coming but they don't
18 look like German tanks. And she went down the road
19 from the farm, and indeed they were Russians. She
20 brought the tank up to the farm. Can you imagine our
21 joy? But the farmhouse was further down and when the
22 Russian came, they were about four Russian soldiers.
23 We came out from the hay and they started to dig
24 through the hay. Can you imagine? There were five
25 S.S. guards hiding there.

1 Q WITH YOU AT THE SAME TIME?

2 A We didn't know if they wanted to escape.
3 They could kill us. They pulled them out and they
4 took them away and then they took us to the farmhouse.
5 Nobody was there. Can you imagine what we did in the
6 farmhouse? We were searching for food. There was
7 food there. But suddenly a girl said: Listen, there
8 is a basement. But it was so hidden you could go
9 through only a little opening when you opened the
10 floor, and she crawled in. There was food for ten
11 years. Everything! Sugar, butter, everything. Can
12 you imagine that hiding there? Not far away at this
13 farm were working French laborers. They were like
14 foreign workers, working for the farm. And those came
15 toward us and said the owner was very cruel to them.
16 They were living outside in barracks. They were
17 searching for him and they found him. The French
18 laborers hung this guy on his door. The Russians said
19 do whatever you want with him. So that's the way I
20 was liberated.

21 Q THAT'S A WONDERFUL STORY. WHEN YOU HAD THE
22 FOOD, WERE YOU CAREFUL IN WHAT YOU ATE OR DID YOU EAT
23 AS MUCH AS YOU COULD?

24 A Where?

25 Q IN THE HOUSE.

1 A We got sick. Can you imagine? The French
2 laborers killed a pig there, a cow, and they brought
3 the food to the open space in the front of the
4 farmhouse and they were cooking and celebrating so we
5 were eating. We got sick.

6 Q YOU WERE NOT USED --

7 A We were not used to eat. But slowly we
8 recovered. And then from Czechoslovakia cars came for
9 us and we went with the cars back to Czechoslovakia
10 because I wanted to go back home. But they told us we
11 can go wherever we want; we are world citizens,
12 because we did not belong to anybody.

13 Q DID YOU STAY ON THE FARM UNTIL SOMEBODY
14 CAME TO GET YOU?

15 A No, no. We left the farm and we went to
16 Neue Brandenburg where the Russians concentrated the
17 former inmates from camp. We went there and we were
18 staying there one month because it was a quarantine.
19 We were full of lice and dirty. The Russians were
20 very nice to us. They had doctors. They gave us
21 food. And they were very, very nice. And one day
22 they told us closeby was a big city: Girls, you want
23 food? You want that? You go to the city and take
24 whatever you want.

25 So me and my friends went downtown. It was about

1 five, six kilometers. The Russians took us on a truck
2 and they said go and do whatever you want. We said
3 no, we are not going alone; stay here and you guard
4 us. Because we were afraid the Germans could kill us.
5 We didn't know where they are hiding.

6 We came to one house and there was on the table --
7 a table was set. Hot soup was on the table. Can you
8 imagine coming in? We didn't see that in three years.

9 Q DID YOU EVER FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO THE
10 OTHER PEOPLE WHEN YOU ESCAPED FROM THAT LINE OF PEOPLE
11 MARCHING?

12 A I don't know, because everybody was lost.
13 There were so many things. Hundreds or thousands
14 never find anybody, only when you keep close. Even a
15 friend. If you disappear five minutes, you are lost.
16 It's a jungle. It was a jungle.

17 But what did I say? When we came to this house,
18 the hot soup on the table, a tablecloth there, set
19 nicely. We all were petrified standing there
20 silently. And one of my friends went in the house
21 searching if somebody is there. She find a lady, old
22 lady. Maybe she was forty. And she started
23 screaming, "No, me no S.S. Me no S.S." And she said,
24 No, you so and so, you were living here a normal life
25 and eating while our people were killed. And she

1 said, "No S.S." But she went and searched the closets
2 and she find two S.S. uniforms. And then she threw it
3 in her face and we couldn't eat the soup. She took
4 the tablecloth and she pulled out everything; she
5 pulled out on the floor because we were so mad and
6 then we went in the house and we find food there and
7 everything. We took everything and we destroyed
8 everything in the house but we didn't touch her, so
9 she is alive. Just, you know, the anger. We
10 destroyed everything. Even, I remember, a featherbed.
11 She cut it and the feathers she threw out through the
12 window. So it was revenge -- kind of revenge.

13 Q THIS WAS THE SAME GIRLS YOU WERE WITH?

14 A Yes, yes, we all at the time were together.
15 We came down and we were in Brandenburg and from there
16 we went to Prague. And in Prague the Czech government
17 already was there and we got some money and we could
18 go and buy ourselves clothing, and still I had my hair
19 very short and full of lice. I got disinfected there
20 but still it came back; the lice came back. And then
21 we had the money. We didn't know what to do with it.
22 So we said let's go to some store. We came to a
23 store. I remember it was shoes and I had wooden
24 shoes. After the war it was not even -- you could not
25 buy in Europe any regular shoes, even what they sold

1 they didn't have soles, they didn't have material.
2 But I had five hundred crowns. With five hundred
3 crowns you couldn't buy too much. I wanted a pair of
4 shoes and the salesperson said it cost eight hundred
5 crowns and I said I only have five hundred and I need
6 these shoes, so he looked at me and he said you don't
7 have to pay nothing.

8 Q HE LOOKED AT YOU AND --

9 A It was a Jewish guy who was hiding there.
10 And then from Prague I waited six weeks, I think so.
11 I wanted to go back home to see if somebody is alive
12 by miracle like I am alive. You never know. I had a
13 sister and three brothers. So I went, but everything
14 was destroyed. No transportation. I couldn't get
15 home because it was about six hundred kilometers from
16 Prague. So once a day one train left, it was loaded.
17 On the top of the train I went. It took me one week
18 to get back home. When we came to Slovakia. Bohemia
19 was different. Bohemia the people were not so
20 anti-semitic. They didn't collaborate like the
21 Slovaks. When I came to Bratislava -- that's the
22 capital of Slovakia where we were living -- on the
23 railroad station a big sign: More came back than they
24 left! We were not wanted. We didn't have where to
25 go; we didn't have where to sleep. So again about

1 three girls went to other sides because they came from
2 other parts. And we four other girls in Bratislava we
3 found a place in a hotel, twenty in one room. One day
4 a young man came in and looked and looked, and it was
5 my cousin.

6 A HE FOUND YOU?

7 Q He told me my sister is alive (nodding).

8 Q OH, HOW WONDERFUL.

9 A She was hiding in Budapest. She had Aryan
10 papers, false papers. And she was hiding in Budapest
11 like Aryan on a false name. And then when they
12 started to collect the Hungarian Jews, she came back
13 to the borders, back to Slovakia and she was -- You
14 wouldn't believe it. The police chief of the city
15 took her as a maid to his house and home. This police
16 chief, he came from the eastern part and after he
17 graduated, he was a lawyer and working in the city
18 hall in our city and was playing cards with my uncle.

19 When she came to Hungary she knew -- Somebody told
20 her about him. She is two years younger than me. She
21 was this time sixteen years old. She was fourteen
22 when she was a maid there. So she told him that where
23 she is if he couldn't help her and indeed he employed
24 her in his house.

25 So my cousin told me he died in 1989. In January

1 he was living in Los Angeles and he looked and
2 recognized me. His two sisters who went to this 25th
3 Block. And he said where are mine two sisters; I said
4 they didn't make it. So I found a cousin. He found
5 me and then he told me she is still at this police
6 chief's house -- my sister. So I went there and then
7 she left with me and we found another cousin. I found
8 two cousins and one cousin had his mother; she was
9 hiding also under false papers, my mother's sister. I
10 found three people. Then I went -- my sister and me
11 went back to our house where we were born. We were
12 living in the capital but where I was born my
13 grandparents -- there was still our house and this
14 house was confiscated by the Slovakia government. The
15 Slovakian government gave it away --

16 (At this point the videocassette was
17 changed.)

18 When I was in Bratislava after I came back, we
19 didn't have nothing, only what I had on my body -- few
20 clothes what I got in Prague. And I went to the
21 Committee, UNRA. It's the United Nations Relief Fund.
22 And there I got help and I was -- other people were
23 waiting for help. I was in line until I got to the
24 window and a nice young man was standing in front of
25 me and he asked me, "Where have you been?" And I

1 said, "In Auschwitz." "Me, too." "Did you find
2 somebody when you came back?" And he said, "No,
3 nobody," and I said, "I found my sister, my cousin, my
4 aunt." He said, "You are lucky." And so I said,
5 "Where you are living?" And he said, "Oh, I have some
6 friends here, living with them." And I said my
7 cousin, he was a jeweler; he had already a store in
8 Bratislava. He was also hiding. Slovakia, where we
9 came from, was liberated already in '44, so he -- it
10 was already a year so he had already his store. So
11 I'm living at my cousin's. He has a house so if you
12 want you can come over. We have even plenty of room.
13 So my husband started coming and coming and he never
14 left.

15 Q OH, ISN'T THAT WONDERFUL?

16 A We met there. He didn't find anybody. And
17 in this house where I went back to Stropkov, I
18 knocked on the door. A man, a Ukraine, opened and
19 asked, "What do you want?" I said "I am Libusha . It
20 is mine parents' house." He slapped the door in mine
21 face and said, "Go back where you came from. A shame
22 that Hitler did not kill you all!" That was my
23 welcome back.

24 Well, he [husband] was shumping my door next day.
25 You know what I did? I found friends, Slovakian too,

1 and I told him. My parents had kind of an inn, so it
2 was a front store, a deli, and we had a couple of
3 rooms which they rented. So I said, you know what, I
4 always wanted this house and I said I'm going to sell
5 it; give me a hundred thousand. Because a hundred
6 thousand at this time after the war was nothing. As
7 soon as I had the restitution, everything ready. I
8 sell it to you; we can make a contract and indeed he
9 did that. But this Ukrainian wanted also to buy the
10 house because he knew I am going to get it back. And
11 I said, "Not on your life; you go to the Ukraine."
12 And they, I understand, shipped him out. But it took
13 me twenty years to get the legal papers and get the
14 money. In 1966 before we came to the United States I
15 got the money.

16 Q HOW WONDERFUL.

17 A Twenty years we were living there. But in
18 Czechoslovakia we had bigger problems, too. After --
19 in 1946 I went back to school because I didn't finish
20 school. My husband too so he made only two-year
21 college and me too, but we got married in the
22 meantime.

23 Q WHAT YEAR DID YOU GET MARRIED?

24 A 1966. 1946.

25 Q 1946. OKAY.

1 A Eighteen of August, '46. My boy was born
2 in 1948, three years later. And we needed a job
3 because we needed rent on the apartment which we got.
4 It was awful to get something after the war but
5 finally we got an apartment and we needed a job. So
6 my husband worked at the ministry of forestry. He was
7 the only Jew who was working there.

8 In 1953 -- I don't know if you know about it --
9 it was a process in Prague. In the government were
10 four Jewish men who fought for freedom of
11 Czechoslovakia alongside with the Russians. They were
12 Communists, too, and they accused them that they are
13 spies and they are working with the West, and they
14 hanged them, all the Jews who were still living in
15 Czechoslovakia. If somebody had some better job, they
16 kicked him out. They kicked him out from the
17 ministry, so he didn't have a job. And I wanted badly
18 a job. Finally I got a -- I applied for one. I had
19 to fill out a form: where have you been during the
20 war, what's your religion. So I said the truth. They
21 needed badly a salesperson in one bookstore. When I
22 turned in the application, he said we don't need you!
23 Because -- I told him I know: because I told you
24 where I was during the war, in Auschwitz, and you knew
25 no Slovakian was in Auschwitz so I must be Jewish, and

1 I wrote in my religion. So next time when I applied
2 for a job, I lied. I didn't fill in that I was in
3 camp, nothing. I left it blank -- everything blank.
4 If people asked me where I was, I said something, and
5 I got the job.

6 I was working fifteen years in the publishing
7 company in Bratislava. I was the manager. "Noshe
8 Vojsko." They published literature mainly for the
9 Army. And then they opened a store, a bookstore, in
10 Bratislava so I was managing the bookstore and I
11 worked there from 1954 until I came here.

12 Q WHEN YOU CAME HERE, DID YOU COME HERE --
13 DID YOU KNOW PEOPLE THAT WERE HERE?

14 A My sister was already here. My sister
15 after the war also she studied and she is a nurse -- a
16 registered nurse. And she was working in the Jewish
17 hospital in Bratislava but she is a surgical nurse.
18 And from Prague they brought in a football player. He
19 had a broken leg and she -- put his leg in --

20 Q IN A CAST?

21 A -- in a cast. And she talked with him in
22 Hungarian. He was from Budapest, a Jewish boy. And
23 they fell in love and married him. But in 1949 she
24 left with him to Italy. He played for Milano soccer
25 -- football -- soccer. And from Milano he transferred

1 to Montpelier in France. Her daughter was born in
2 Milano; her son was born in France; and in 1952 they
3 came to the United States and he is a manager in
4 Hiltons since Hilton was built.

5 Q WHAT CITY?

6 A San Francisco.

7 Q AND HOW WONDERFUL. AND YOU HAVE A SON?

8 A I have a son born in Czechoslovakia in '48;
9 and in '51 my daughter. My daughter has a master's
10 degree from business administration here. She studied
11 in San Francisco. And my son, engineering in
12 computers. And I have a retirement home -- Breder's
13 Villa -- one in Daly City, one in San Francisco. My
14 son -- I am retired now with my husband. My son
15 manages the Daly City place; my son-in-law, the San
16 Francisco place, so all in the family. So we all made
17 it. I say I'm a survivor.

18 Q YES, YOU ARE A SURVIVOR.

19 A I didn't wait for handouts. I came here
20 with forty dollars in my pockets, with two children,
21 teen-age children. In '66 we wanted them to study.
22 We never got any help from anybody. We didn't have
23 very good experience with the Agency, I'm sorry, not
24 at the beginning and not later. I'm sorry to tell
25 that. The Jewish community was not generous to us at

1 all. Whatever we made it, we made it our own and if
2 we needed it badly we asked for it, but every time we
3 found a closed door.

4 Q THAT'S TOO BAD.

5 A I thought always when we survived we will
6 be special treated. We didn't have ever special
7 treatment.

8 Q YOU HAD TO TAKE CARE OF THINGS YOURSELF?

9 A We had to take care of ourselves. Since
10 seventeen I'm on my own, but I always made it.

11 Q WHEN YOU THINK BACK ON HOW YOU SURVIVED, DO
12 YOU HAVE ANY SPECIAL FEELING ABOUT WHY YOU SURVIVED
13 AND HOW YOU SURVIVED?

14 A I don't have special feelings. I feel if
15 somebody even in the worst circumstances wants to
16 survive, you'll always find a way. You just have to
17 have a strong will to make it and never give up. It's
18 always a tomorrow. I always said I don't want to go
19 to the gas chamber. Well, you are going to be killed.
20 What is the difference? I beg for tomorrow. I have
21 time. Always time. But the tomorrows never came.
22 But one day it came.

23 Q SO YOU SAID THAT TO YOURSELF?

24 A Absolutely.

25 Q THAT'S HOW YOU --

1 A And my girlfriends, too.

2 Q YOU SAID TO YOUR FRIENDS --

3 A And I tell you, I relayed the best to
4 people in camp.

5 And in fact here in San Francisco I have friends
6 also from camp and we are forming now a new group --
7 self-help group, "Survivors for Survivors," because I
8 can tell you the truth. Here -- I don't know if it's
9 in other cities also. Here in San Francisco the
10 Jewish services and the Jewish community, they forgot
11 all about the Holocaust survivors and they don't care
12 about them. Whenever -- there are two hundred
13 survivors here around the bay area. I mean survivors
14 like me. A survivor also is person who came in '38
15 and '36 in Shanghai; because they had to escape they
16 survived. But "Surviving" and "surviving" is a big
17 difference. And they find always that there is a
18 tomorrow.

19 One time prior to now the Operation Exodus and no
20 money for suffering survivors and no willing for them
21 to survive, so we said we are going do it ourselves.
22 We had a meeting in the Hebrew Academy, 17th of July,
23 three hundred fifty people came, and we formed an
24 organization.

25 Q IS THERE ANOTHER NAME?

1 A Tikva.

2 Q YES, I'VE HEARD ABOUT IT. IT'S WONDERFUL.

3 A Yes, because nobody cares about us and we
4 are aging. Not everybody is lucky to have children,
5 and the spouse died. The people are depressed. At
6 least the end of our lives we should have a little
7 help from the community, but no. No.

8 Q THAT'S WHY YOU TODAY YOUR HISTORY OF YOUR
9 STORY IS SO IMPORTANT TO RECORD.

10 A Absolutely.

11 Q FOR EVERYONE.

12 A Because I see -- I visit many; and those
13 people, they don't trust anybody. They don't believe
14 strangers, but when a Survivor comes it is different.

15 Q YOU ARE IN A COMMUNITY OF SURVIVORS?

16 A Yes. We wanted to be affiliated to the
17 Holocaust Library. In Israel there is a group -- it's
18 called Amha and also a Survivor founded the group,
19 from Holland. He came here two years ago, and I went
20 there with a couple of my friends to listen what he
21 has to say. And he wanted to organize a group who's
22 going to work only to collect donations for that group
23 in Israel and we said fine. We wrote him a letter and
24 said fine. But we don't want our people who live here
25 just because they live here to be forgotten too; they

1 need some help -- psychological. I don't mean
2 financial kind of help. So he said, no, it's only for
3 Israel. And then I said we would like to have the
4 same name: Amha of Northern California. He said no.
5 No. So we will have our own name, so we got Tikva.
6 It's "hope." Anyway --

7 Q YEAH.

8 A They are planning to have all Auschwitz
9 Survivors who were three years in Auschwitz, a
10 gathering in Israel.

11 Q IT'S WONDERFUL, I THINK, YOUR STORY OF
12 SURVIVAL. IT'S AN INSPIRATION.

13 A Well, it's a story of survival, absolutely,
14 because I know other people who survived in the
15 wilderness. This is a story, a special, because no
16 other people survived the tragedy, only we Jews,
17 because we were persecuted only because we were Jews.
18 But surviving, that's an accident, somebody is lost,
19 or something. But this is special. So you can
20 compare the Holocaust with other tragedies. They use
21 it in so many different ways now. I feel it is not
22 right. It is not right. For us it is special and
23 until we see a Survivor survivor, we try to help each
24 other and with this group we are forming, it is going
25 to be Survivors for Survivors. And it is a nonprofit,

1 self-help organization. We don't have a penny now.
2 Each of us pays for the stamps or for what we need.

3 We had this party for three hundred fifty so we
4 paid the food and everything and The Hebrew Academy
5 gave us the room for free. We don't have a penny.
6 And when we asked from the Jewish Welfare Federation a
7 grant, the response was we are now busy with the
8 Russian emigrants; we don't have money. But we asked
9 already four years ago. Nothing.

10 Q LINDA, THANK YOU VERY, VERY MUCH.

11 A Sure, you are welcome. I could sit here
12 forever. I have to tell a story which is in Czech
13 literature. It was published by my company where I
14 was working. It's called Even Children Went To Their
15 Deaths. They were only six thousand printed. I gave
16 it to the Holocaust Library. And on the front page,
17 the motto, is a letter from a little Polish boy who
18 was in camp and he writes a letter to his parents.
19 They still were in the ghetto. "Dear parents: I am
20 here in this camp. I don't have shoes on my feet. I
21 don't have what to eat. Every day they beat me and I
22 have to go to work. My friends are dying around me
23 and I don't know how to describe you or tell you this.
24 If the skies were paper and all the oceans ink, I
25 couldn't describe the horror of what I go through."

1 Q OH, THAT'S THE BEGINNING OF THIS BOOK?

2 A I remember it. It was printed in 1948.
3 And I remember I was in the hospital. I was in
4 childbirth and one of the nurses brought me this book
5 because she knew I was in camp and it was a big
6 picture book. I cried all the time.

7 Q AT THE BOOK?

8 A No, over my newborn son. What a world will
9 be there when he grows up! I gave it [the book] to
10 the Holocaust Library.

11 Q SO I CAN GO TO THE LIBRARY AND SEE IT?

12 A It's a picture book. Even Children Went To
13 Their Deaths. That's the title.

14 Q THANK YOU, LINDA.

15 (This concludes the interview.)

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