

OK, any time.

Today is June 19, 1991, and I am Ellen Szakal, an interviewer with the Holocaust Oral History Project of San Francisco. Today we are talking with Esther Kozlowski for her second interview. And assisting in the interview is Jill Nierman. Welcome again, Esther.

Thank you.

Would you pick up the story where you choose?

Well, I don't know what you want me to say. Would you like me to tell the story about when my child was run over by a horse and wagon?

That's fine.

And my father brought him in. The child was like in a shock. And his leg was injured. One of his leg was scraped. It wasn't a serious injury, but the child was crying. And carrying him and giving him to him, my father said, I wish that that baby would have been killed. He would be maybe better off. And that helps me to decide, for some reason-- I don't know what it was, a reaction or something.

When I escaped from my parents'-- not parents' house-- where we all stayed together, all of us, the married and-- the only one that wasn't married was Aaron, the youngest brother. He was very young still. And I tore a very nice blouse, a very thin, fine blouse, because we didn't have bandages, and I put around my little son's leg that bandage. And I pretended that I'm going to a doctor to Krakow.

Why my steps took me-- my first steps took me to Krakow is because the same night, my brother came into where I was in the same room. Or it was in the kitchen. I guess it was in the kitchen. My parents were there. And he was crying. And he said, Adam from Uderski the engineer Adam, wants to take Eva with him to his house and wants to take her as a governess to their children.

And my father said, give her to me. Said, but how can I give my beautiful flower, my beautiful daughter? He will make a whore out of her. And my father said, maybe. At least she will be living and will tell what happened to her. Maybe she is the one that will tell our story. Give her to him. What else can you do?

So it was decided between them-- we didn't speak much-- that she is going with Adam to his family. Well, when I-- I went to a friend of my-- I don't know if I told that, if I told that in the story, that once was a Catholic, of course, a Pole. He was married. I was married. But once he was in love with me, and I thought that maybe he will be able to help me to escape to somewhere, to someone.

Well, I crossed the river. I took off my [INAUDIBLE] and I went to him and I knelt in the doorway. And I begged him to help me, at least to save my child. And his wife was there with her little girl and with him. His name was Henry Navarut. We knew one another for a very long time.

And my brothers and he and his brother were very great friends. They used to come to our house. We used to go dancing together. I was younger, but I tagged along, and he was very much in love with me. Well, there is a separate story for it, and I don't want to go into details. Maybe it's not significant.

So she asked-- his wife asks him to help me. She knew me. And he's-- we made a rendezvous at the station, at the railroad station, that he will be waiting for me in the morning at that station, and he will take me to a place where he-- I might be sheltered, I might be find-- I might find some help, and maybe I can stay with his friend and with my baby.

Anyway. So I was reassured and I went back. And I went to a former teacher of mine-- that is the night of my escape from the ghetto-- a former teacher, Mrs. [PERSONAL NAME] And this was all done at night under the threat of death.

And I had some clothing with her. I had a very beautiful suit from my trousseau. I got married in 1938.

And she gave it to me. And from her sleeping son, she took off a gold medallion of-- of the godmother with baby, and with a gold chain. And she gave it to me, and she said, maybe that will help you. And she said, may your son lead out all the Jews maybe to Palestine, to a safe place. Or maybe he will become the first-- because I called him Mieszko after the first king-- Polish king [INAUDIBLE] who--

See? I'm going into Polish-- who converted Poland under his rule. Polish was converted to Catholicism, Christianity. And maybe he will be another King [PERSONAL NAME] the first [PERSONAL NAME] first king of Poland. Anyway. I left. Yes, she had a hat I didn't like because it was a-- it's not important.

But I had all this arranged before my brother told us about Eva, about my niece, Moniek, the oldest brother. And I just-- they were waiting for a train to leave. And I just went out to the garden. There was a little garden. And she was sitting there with Adam. I went out to say goodbye to my niece. We were not much different in ages, you see.

And-- and I said to him, to Adam-- I never spoken to him. I never seen him in my life before. I said to him, you see, Mr. Engineer-- because I knew that he's an engineer-- how about could you please maybe help me? Even I was assured that he-- that Henry is going to take me away in the morning, I spoke to him like somebody else spoke to him, not me.

Why did I speak the second time and ask for help when I was assured that Henry will help me? But I spoke up. And he said, maybe. I said, please come in and take a look at my child. He came in, and that child was so beautiful. Blonde. Beautiful blonde hair. He was asleep in his little crib.

He said, I am going back to the office. I'll bring you a letter. Mind you, without anything. You see? I didn't know what to do, how to react. He went to-- it wasn't far away. It was maybe block or two, his office, from the ghetto. And he went, and he came back with a letter. It wasn't exactly a very fancy letter. It was a piece of office paper in an envelope.

And he told me, you take the train and go to Krakow, and they live there and there. I don't remember exactly. I think [PLACE NAME] 12. I'm not sure. Excuse me. I went into the house later, and I grabbed whatever I could, my husband things, like a very fancy-- very fancy box of-- together with a set of shaving, with lotion and with a very beautiful real broom, that shaving broom.

And I just gave him that box and I said, Mr. Engineer, if we ever live through the war, maybe I can-- maybe I can reciprocate for what just-- for what you just have done. For some reason or other, it-- is that me? I wasn't that smart. Why did I-- it's hard to believe, but that's what it was.

And the next morning, Ivan, he went one way in the opposite direction because he lived not far from Skarzysko-Kamienna. Maybe you heard about Skarzysko-Kamienna. It was a concentration camp, not far with his family. [INAUDIBLE] It's also all in state of Kielce.

Anyway, in the morning it was like we say Tisha B'Av, the second destruction of the temple. In our house, not a-- I was-- it just was a horrible, horrible situation. And I picked myself up, and that night my husband came from the labor camp, came home for the night. I got dressed.

Another lady, a former neighbor of ours-- her name was Sophie, but I don't remember her last name. Her husband was in Bedzin. You mentioned Bedzin yesterday. He was in Bedzin a captain of the police. But they had a nice parcel, and they build right next to our property. My father let him build, used the wall-- it was a firewall-- use the wall for their buildings to build. He let them use the water, the well for water.

Anyway. We were very good friends. And she brought me up, from her little boy-- her boy was bigger already, grew out of it-- she brought me a beautiful pelerine, a mountain pelerine, from Zakopane. Maybe you heard the name. It's in the Tatras, you see, the Tatra Mountains, and a little cape. And that child was just gorgeous.

And when I was leaving, my husband went with me to the gate. But before I left the child, my father was loving that

child so much. He took the child for me. And he said, my little daughter, where are you going with that face? And I said, daddy, I'm going to pinch myself before I left.

And I couldn't-- I couldn't pry away my little son from my father. He was encircling him with his arms and with his legs. My father asked me to kiss the mezuzah. You know what a mezuzah is, don't you? On the door. On the frame of each Jewish home, there is a mezuzah with the Ten Commandments.

And there are all kinds of blessings, and so on, on parchment, and it is rolled up and put in a little container. You buy them now in fancy stores-- in fancy Jewish stores, like at the bookstore on Geary. Or even the Mount Zion, they have them in the gift shop. I'm sure they have them downstairs in the gift shop.

But anyway, and I kissed the mezuzah. I never stopped kissing them. I kiss them when I leave my house. I have a mezuzah now. And I remember that was the last kiss my husband gave me when I was at the gate, on my left cheek. And I just stood there, and he pushed me through the gate. And I went down from the hill, and I proceeded to the railroad station.

At the railroad station, I went and bought a ticket. I proceeded to the exit, and there was no Henry. There you are. See? Henry didn't show. But I didn't turn back. I had my ticket, and I went out to the train. There were people that recognized me, and they tipped their hats.

I approached the train and I went into the train. And I took with me exactly-- I had 500 zloty that were equivalent to a kilogram of sugar or a kilogram of butter. I had in my-- bag, like an attache case.

I had a bread and I had the thermos of tea. And for the child, some shirts, maybe a couple of shirts I couldn't take too much. I was afraid that I lack too much-- a couple of shirts, maybe a couple of underpants. He was already toilet trained.

And I boarded the train, and the train started moving, and I was so overjoyed. And so much tension just left me, and I held on to my baby. And it took us 1 and 1/2 hour to get to Krakow. And I got down from the train with my baby in my arms. And I was already non-Jewish, you know?

I don't know if I mentioned that I borrowed a Kennkarte and a-- yeah. From a friend of [PERSONAL NAME] my niece's friends who were going to grammar school together. And she lent me that Kennkarte. You know, it's like a birth certificate, but it was given to the Germans-- by the Germans to the Polish population because Jews had different Kennkarte, different passports without the picture, you see?

And I became Helena Hahorska. And while I was walking with my child, it started screaming because there were so many soldiers at the station, and they were marching. And it was so new to him because the child was sheltered and loved and surrounded by all my brothers, my sister, and my sister-in-laws. We all lived together, packed together like herring. But we lived together. And here, that was unfamiliar to the baby, you see.

But I came out, and I didn't know where to go. And I was just a little bit crazy, overwhelmed by all this what happening. And I boarded the fiacre, see, a dorozka. And I gave them the address, and they took me to Adam's brother-in-law and his mother. I climbed the stairs with my child, rang the bell.

And there was a beautiful, gray-haired, little tiny woman. Beautiful. And I said, I beg your pardon. Hello. How are you? I am a friend of Adam's. He is a friend of my husband's and my family, and he sent me to you. I have to go to see a doctor with my child. My child was injured in a little accident, and I have to see a doctor.

I have to show him to a doctor. I don't know-- I don't trust the people there, the doctors. She let me in [GERMAN] without any-- see, I'm going into German. Anyway, different languages. She let me in. She fixed us tea. She led us to a room and said, this is going to be your room. Any friend of Adam's is our friend. Everything was peachy.

I unpacked the whole bread and I put it and I said, I don't have much and I couldn't take much, but if you let me treat all-- whoever is-- she say, oh, yeah, I'm only living here with my son. And his wife, as a matter of fact, my daughter--

Adam's wife is my daughter-- and she is right now-- she is right now with Adam's wife.

Wait. Oh, God. What am I talking about? She is right now with-- in Skarzysko or something. His wife, [? Seymon ?] Stankevich wife, was right now with Adam's wife. See, I got mixed up here. But anyway, he came home from work. She introduced us and she said, the lady is going to stay with us maybe for a few days.

And I said, I'm supposed to wait here for Adam because he's coming, and he will take me to a doctor with the child. And I'm waiting for him. "OK." We had very little to eat. They were-- I saw that there was not hunger exactly, but nothing to brag about to eat. But somehow, she had a little bit of milk for the baby. She had a soup cooked and so on and so on.

And we slept the first night. Of course, I took baldrian drops because my heart was just going like crazy. I was with strange people. They didn't know me from Adam. They only knew through the little letter what he gave me. And I was waiting for Adam. But in the morning, Mr. Stankevich was having breakfast at the kitchen table, and Mrs. Stankevich's mother knocked on our door.

We were just quiet. The child was needed some food, but I didn't dare go and get, you know, and Poles. And I didn't know how to offer her some money that I have a little left or something-- what to do. But she knocked at the door and she said, please come in. Whatever we have, we'll share.

[INAUDIBLE] we were in the kitchen. She just had a rooster. And she started to kill it. She put a pot underneath and she was cutting the head off. Bronia was her name. Mrs. Stankevich, Bronia Stankevich. And she-- my little boy said, Mommy, and the shochet isn't coming here. See? Here you are. Do you understand what it means the shochet, the ritual killer, you know?

Because were my parents in what terrible struggle we were, they wouldn't eat any other way if it's not ritually killed-- a rooster or whatever it was, you see? They wouldn't touch meat. They were very religious people. And with that, he just denounced our-- he denounced us, the little boy.

And that was quiet in the kitchen. Nobody uttered a word. And the child was scared probably. And that man says, Mrs., I don't owe my brother-in-law anything. You pack up your things and you leave our house. You go where you came from. See? I said, no. Mr. Engineer, I am sorry, I won't go back to hell.

You can go for the Gestapo. Call the Gestapo. Go for the Gestapo. Do whatever you want, but I'm not moving from that house. Maybe it's impertinent. Maybe-- since I got out of there, nobody can make me go back. Nobody. I said, do whatever you want. I am going to wait for Adam, for your brother-in-law. He sent me here. I am terribly sorry if I want to pay you, but I'm not moving one step. I have nowhere to go.

As it happened, the same night he telegraphed him or he phoned him. Adam showed up with Eva, with Ivonia. His wife didn't want her. See? And Adam came and we sat and we talked. And he said, look you at my brother-in-law. He's very scared, and you know why. You know why.

His mother is a converted Jew to Christianity, and it goes to the third generation. It goes back to the third generation. And his children are in danger. He is in danger. Maybe the old lady, she doesn't care anymore. That's what it was. She didn't care anymore. But he cares, and he wants to live.

And he looked like a typical Jew. The little lady was so cute, his mother. I don't know-- and he looked-- big nose and Semitic eyes. Very, very Jewish. I don't know what a Jew looks like if I passed as a Gentile. [LAUGHS] I don't know. I always thought that I don't look maybe Jewish, but all Jews look like I.

We talked, and he said, I can give you an address to OjcÅ³w. And it's 30 kilometers from here. And I get a fiacre for you in the morning. But my dear ladies, as much as I would like to help you, I can't do anything. The whole family is against us, and that's it. You have to leave.

And early in the morning, I bundled up my child. And Eva was so blue in her face. Poor Eva was so scared, more than I.

I was scared. I cannot say I wasn't scared. And we went. We went, and the horses were clopping on the road, and it was like-- who knows-- maybe a little promenade to somebody else. But to us, it was dead or life-- or life or death, whatever you prefer how to put it.

On the way to Ojców, we met Jews going with a wooden placard on strings. And it was like little boards, and it was written "Jude," "Jew." And they were carrying shovels and all kinds of digging equipment under the watch of German-- I don't know-- soldiers with weapons stretched out, ready to shoot.

And we were traveling. Beside that, we met a car load of egg crates. A big car load. And we were nearing Ojców. And he gave us-- Adam gave us an address. And I said, look, Ivonia I didn't call her, I think, Ivonia anymore because she has her already name also changed to Marisha [PERSONAL NAME]

And if you want to hold the child and I go down to that house-- that was on the address on the piece of paper from Adam. If you don't want to, you must go and ask the people if they have a free room or free quarters that we would want to stay for a couple of weeks, that the child had scarlet fever and I want him to be in the fresh air and so on.

And that's where-- I am from Katowice. I told her to say that my aunt is from Katowice and I'm traveling with her. It was a whole story, just whatever came to my mind, whatever came out of my mouth. And she went in and she came out, and she said, you know, I am sorry, but they don't have any rooms for it.

OK. So we proceed. And all of a sudden, there showed up a young woman walking with little bundles, little packages, like for mailing. And she's walking very pert and very nice girl, nice good-looking girl. And I said-- in Polish, of course, I said to her, and maybe that lady knows about a place where we could stay for a couple of weeks.

And she said, maybe. Maybe I do. See? But would you ladies wait for me? I'm going to the post office. And on my way back, I can show you some places. You see? We waited, and she came back from the post office. And she crawled into the carriage, and she took us to her villa-- to her building, whatever she rented for the summer. But that was in summer.

And she led us to her room, and she said, you can rent with me a room if you want to. And my God, that was like God-sent. Well, maybe someone doesn't believe, but that was a bunch of miracles. See? And I started to complain that I liked your room, but I don't like the straw sacks on it. Could she please change the straw at least?

And we need some bedding. We took very little because I am from Katowice and I couldn't take out too much. And that's it. And she loved the baby. She couldn't get over him. She just couldn't get over him. And so we had a roof over our head. And I asked her if she could at least a little bit do some shopping for us.

Eva had a couple thousand zloty. And we were out of the woods, because my money hardly could last-- but I had just that suit on. And it was terrible. I didn't have what to change into. Maybe I had a night gown or something. I don't remember, maybe a towel or something.

And I-- she said, oh, please ladies come down and we will have dinner together. Of course, it wasn't a too big dinner. There were such-- you know, because we traveled practically a whole day. And Mrs. Stankevich gave me some food for the road. But then we went down. I remember like today. She had a plum soup from plums and boiled potatoes. That was heaven.

And I washed up the baby, washed up my-- we washed ourself up and went upstairs. And the next day, we were introduced to-- yes, I forgot to say what the young woman's name was-- Lillian. Lilly. We called her Lilly. And they were two orphans. They were for a famous old, old family named [PERSONAL NAME]

And they had an aunt with them, an older spinster. And they had an aunt in Warsaw, an author. You know, she was writing books. And Kajic the brother, just fell in love with Eva, you see, with my niece. And I passed a few days. I don't remember if I paid her for a day or for-- by day or we paid her for a week. I don't know. I think we paid her maybe for two weeks, so long that she accepted the money.

And one night, I was in bed with my little boy, and Eva spilled everything to Kajic. Everything. You see? Who we are. From where. From where we are. Everything. And he told her that before the war, he was attending the University in Krakow, and he was a terrible anti-Semite. And he was killing-- beating up Jews with the weights from a scale at the University.

Well, Kajic became our tool, so to speak. He went back to the ghetto. He got in touch with my husband, got in touch with Ivonia's parents. And got money for us, got clothes for us. You see? And the liquidation didn't take place yet. They were still alive. They were still there all of them. Some women went to work into the labor camps as protection, the younger women.

And they came the day that the liquidation took place. And my mother went into hiding. My sister and my sister-in-law were taken away to Chelmno. The men were left in the five labor camps. There were five of them in SÄ™dziszÄ³w. It was a very important cross station. And they expanded it and built lots, lots, lots of building-- many buildings they built, and they expanded the rails.

Anyway. They needed manpower to work, so they kept them in. And the director of the camp was promised that he will have the Jews until July 1943. But this is a separate story, and I want to continue with my own story. Is that right that I'm not straying away?

That's fine. Why did this fellow make such a turnaround after being such an anti-Semite?

That he didn't approve of the methods, and he was very, very much against the Germans, you see. And he didn't think that the Jews deserved such treatments. Change. People change. Don't we change, all of us? Well, he witnessed plenty because he was-- every week, or twice a week, he was in Krakow and he saw it. Plaszow. The establishing of Plaszow.

Anyway, this was a big concentration camp in Krakow. And the ghetto in Krakow. There was so much. There was so much. It was terrible. And willingly or not willingly, he witnessed it. And he just-- it turned his inside out-- upside down, because-- which human being that has a little education and a little humility or feelings in him, how can-- how can anyone digest it?

People have to be sadists, not to have feelings complete-- feelings for innocent people, for children. I'll tell you the story what happened to the children in Krakow, the little babies. Anyway. You see, the people that were inside the ghettos and inside the concentration camps and inside the labor camps don't know that much what I do. You understand? It was handed to me maybe first- or second-hand, but nevertheless it was registered and I remember it. See?

But anyway. So where did I-- oh, why the change? Call it a miracle. I don't know. See? Regretfully, Eva didn't survive. But anyway. But there came a time when I sent Kajic that he brought bad news, that no one is there, that my mother is hiding somewhere with a peasant family, that the women were all loaded and taken away.

And many people are unable maybe to work, but able body work they kept in the five concentration-- they became concentration camps. From labor camps they changed to concentration camps. But I knew that my sister was taken away. My sister-in-law was taken away. He said that they even sent somebody--

That was impossible because they were probably killed right away in any concentration camp or gas chambers. In Chelmno, I know that they wound up in Chelmno, that they sent a railroad worker for clothes. For some reason, my oldest brother and my brother-in-law, they found some clothes and gave them bundles. I don't know. Maybe money. Maybe clothes. Maybe whatever. I wasn't there.

And one when it was already-- when there was the-- I remember that, the liquidation of Wieliczka. Have you heard about Wieliczka yet? No? Wieliczka was very close to OjcÄ³w, salt mines, you know? Have you heard of the salt mines in Poland?

From your tape.

Pardon?

From your tape.

Yeah. It was liquidated, and the men were drinking after the liquidation. The police came to Kajic's house, and I bundled up my little boy and put him to sleep. And he wanted us to go down to entertain those policemen. You see? And we went down, and my baby was quiet and peaceful. You see?

And we went down. We played cards with them. God, if they didn't kill us at that time, I don't know what happened. Anyway. Or arrest us at least, or whatever. But I apologized that I would like to go to bed, and I went up in my-- the first time that my little boy wet his bed. I mentioned it. He was so-- poor thing-- scared.

But he didn't utter a word or cry or anything. I left him all alone. See? And I said, it's all right, and he was so happy and he hugged me. Anyway. Kajic was really an angel to us. When he went to Krakow, he brought something. We didn't lack in eggs and potatoes. We didn't lack that. We had it. We had it. Or potato soup or something.

And I didn't know how to kill any chicken or any-- I wouldn't do it. I wouldn't do it. But I used to say, oh, would you-- I have to attend. Would you please? She bought it for us, and she killed it and she cleaned it. I didn't know how, the Catholic way or the Gentile way, because Jews do kosher their meat. You see? Are you Jewish?

Mm-hmm.

Then you probably-- maybe you don't practice it, but you know. Are you? No. Yeah?

Why does that surprise you?

Huh?

Does that surprise you?

Yeah, because I don't know. You're blonde and fair. [LAUGHS] I don't know. I think-- well, in Israel--

Everybody's blonde. Many blondes.

Yeah. Would you believe that? Yeah. Well, my immediate family were many blonde people. My son was blonde, and my grandson is blonde. He's blue-eyed and light hair, sandy hair. And my younger one is also blue-eyed. Beautiful blue eyes. And a little bit of reddish in his hair. But gorgeous two children.

Next time, if I-- I bring you-- [LAUGHS] I bring you some pictures. I would love to let you know a little bit of my family. But anyway. I meant to, and I don't know why I didn't take it. But anyway, where was I In OjcÅ³w, right?

Mm-hmm.

And it was already shortly before Christmas, maybe four weeks before Christmas. And Kajic went to the concentration camps, and somehow he got in-- I don't know how-- to send SÄ™dziszÄ³w again I think for the third or fourth time. And he came back with my boots. Where the boots he got out, I don't know, and some warm clothing and for clothing for the baby. And again, a few thousand zloty for I and for Ivonia for Maresha.

And he said that we can expect any day somebody who will make false papers for us. You see? And we were waiting patiently. And one day, another engineer showed up. He recognized my bro-- my husband in the camp, and he asked him-- he was a customer of ours or something, an engineer Mazurek. The name was Mazurek.

And he showed up, and he brought-- he had a priest brother in Wieliczka. And apparently, he supplied them with birth certificates. You see? And at that ground, I don't know how that was produced or how it proceeded. Apparently, my

husband paid him. It cost money to do things, to have done anything like that.

And we prepared pictures. Kajic brought a photographer, and he took pictures of Eva and I. My child [? Mieczo ?] had a birth certificate. I had a birth certificate. And I still remember the credentials, all of it. I was Helena Kravchek. My first name was Helena, Kravcheck my last name. I was the daughter of Adam Adamski. Yeah, Adam Adamski.

And [? Mieczo ?] was [? Mieczoslaw ?] Kravcheck. My son. And Ivonia was Maria Kwiecien No, not KwiecieÅ,, [? Kwiatkowska ?]. Because the other girl was KwiecieÅ,, I don't know what this-- mixed up. That showed up. While we were there-- I forgot to mention we were still upstairs in the rooms, in the original rooms.

There showed up a young lady from Warsaw. She said she is from Warsaw. She was from Warsaw. And she started to teach my little son how to pray in Polish. I knew. I know all the prayers from before because I went to a Catholic grammar school, you see. I had the background, the Catholic background. [LAUGHS]

I had something to identify with. I knew still all the prayers and the carols, Catholic carols. I even sang in the chorus, in the Catholic chorus, you see, because I went to a Catholic school. I mentioned that? I think so. But anyway. She started to teach my grandson-- my son. "My grandson." Why do I say "my grandson"? My son how to pray in Polish, and who to pray to.

Yeah, I just-- I am going back and forth. Well, we had Kennkarte, real Kennkartes, you see, as non-Jews. If they were good or bad, I show you-- tell you later a story that they must have been good. I don't know. But anyway. It was getting very cold upstairs. There were no heating facilities. It was getting December, coming close to December. Or was it December already?

And after that-- no, when that engineer Mazurek showed up, he wanted to take Eva to some kind-- I forgot the city-- that he has work for her in a bakery. You see? He wanted to take her, but he didn't take her at that time, at the first time when he was there. He wanted Kajic to bring Eva to Krakow.

And we were already in a room downstairs where Kajic was storage-ing the eggs that he delivered to Krakow. But in front of the room that we all three were, he put on potatoes to cover the entrance, like a mountain of potatoes. You couldn't walk out. And there was a separate entrance through the storage room, the egg storage room. You see?

And it was like in a cellar, because there were little windows, but the road was much, much higher on the first floor, and this were just the light coming in from like a ravine into those rooms. And there we were. How we managed-- but we managed. And all of a sudden, I received news through a friend of ours, a very good friend, a Mr. Yannik. I received a letter that someone is going to show up for me and the baby.

It was the meister. You know what a meister is? The foreman of my husband in that concentration camp. You see? And his wife came-- no, Eva left first. Eva left first. And she cried and cried. And she said, [? Mieczu ?] I love you so much, but I have to go. She was terrified.

She was terrified to be with us because my child was circumcised. See? He was born so short before the war, but he was religiously circumcised, you see, in Katowice. So she was very, very frightened. You probably know that in Europe they don't circumcise the Catholic children or any other religion. Only England I think circumcise their boys. But other Europeans don't, you see?

So she left with Kajic. And for some reason or other, she disappeared from my life. And it was very hard to get in touch with anybody. And if you got in touch, you were scared, mortally scared-- you understand-- to risk the other's life and your own life. Anyway.

And a few days before Christmas, a beautiful lady showed up with my fur coat and with a hat. My fur coat was hidden with the family Pavelski, and for the baby, his clothes. We got dressed up like nobody's business, and she took us to her home, to Krakow. But it wasn't direct in Krakow. It was near Plaszow.

I forgot what the name was. I only remembered that she lived on the Kosciuszki 4. I don't remember-- I don't-- I don't-- Prokocim. Yeah. Prokocim was a little town on the outskirts of Krakow. Plaszow was on the outskirts of Krakow. But anyway, she--

Who was she?

She was the wife of the foreman, of my husband's foreman. And to keep-- he became very friendly with my husband, and my husband became very friendly with him. And he probably told them how things are, you see, and that he has a wife that lives there with a child, and that they got-- I don't know, I wasn't there, how this was arranged or how this was fabricated. I have no idea.

But she came and she took us, and we found heaven. In all the war, in all the schlepping around, in all this starvation and persecution from the Poles too, but I never found such a wonderful woman. But she was all for it that I poison myself in the child. You see?

And she taught me how to knit. I never knew. I knew how to crochet. But she taught me how to knit, and that came in very handy in Warsaw. And also, she did many things. She was a very good sewer. I had a beautiful suit. I have a tweed suit that my son-- my husband sent me. And she did it for-- she made a coat for my little boy, and a cape.

And when the time came, we traveled to Warsaw. Well, I go back to it. We were there. And one night, we were-- it was already after Easter because I went into church to Easter. She even registered us, and we were getting provisions by cards, provision-- you know what it is, rations? We had card rations, you see?

And I went to church with her sister. And she arranged it so that when her family came to visit, she used to say that I am a cousin of her husband's. You see? And when the husband's family came to visit, she used to say I am her cousin. You see? And my little boy called her auntie. Her name was Wanda.

They were childless. They had a little home. And I helped her out in the house, keeping clean. And unfortunately, one of the days toward spring, my little boy caught bronchial pneumonia. And there wasn't a way not to call in a doctor. See? But I had to because he didn't stop coughing, and it was excruciating.

And we couldn't help him without the doctor. And she called in a doctor. And I just told my little boy, please [? Mieczu?], when the doctor came, you listen, but listen good to mommy. Don't let-- by any chance, don't let him take off your pajama pants. See? He was in bed, and he examined him.

And he didn't wrestle. He wanted to pull his pants, and he said, no [NON-ENGLISH] No, I don't have a bellyache! See? See? The child by himself-- I told him not to let him pull down the pants, and he said, I am not having a bellyache! You see? I don't know-- I don't know how to translate that or how to make you understand what it was all about.

He took Wanda, the doctor-- apparently, he knew what's cooking. He took Wanda with him. He gave her medication. He gave her not only medication but vitamins. You see? And we cured the baby. But in April, I wrote to my husband I was so heartbroken that I cannot go on any longer, that I want to come back and that we die all three together, no matter what. You see?

And he wrote me in his last letter, please, you have to live and my child has to live. See? Like a command. We both have to survive and live. I received that letter. I couldn't keep letters like that. I burned it. I remember Wanda's brother. He was also an engineer, a chemical engineer. He came once to visit.

And we were speaking, and I still had a diamond ring on my finger. And we started talking and so on and so on. Very nice man. But I knew that he has something-- I felt it-- against me. I felt it that he has something against me. With one of her sister's, Wanda's sisters, I was on very good terms with one.

One was a teacher, this Yasha I think. You see, I still remember. She didn't live close. They lived very far away in a small town. But we went there once to visit. Mind you, in the snow. Where do I have my-- excuse me. Could I reach

for--

We need about 10 seconds, and I'll let you know when. OK.

Well, I couldn't comprehend. I just, for no reason or other, I just couldn't-- I couldn't digest it. She wanted me to poison the baby and poison myself. She even said that her brother would supply us with the poison. See? The chemical engineer. And I couldn't. And in other ways, she was so good, so wonderful. Whatever she could spare first I came.

She even took me to a millinery shop to have my hat refreshed a little bit and maybe turned a little bit different. I don't know. I cannot begin to tell you. But as I said, who knows what's governing people, how they feel one minute and the other minute they feel differently? She always said, I couldn't go on like that. I just couldn't go on like that. And the next minute, she-- oh, eat, Helen. Oh, eat, Helen. Please do eat. When I was choking on something practically-- couldn't swallow.

And sometimes we heard the shots and the screams from Plaszow. And one day, one of his cousins-- yeah, his cousin, so to speak, came. And she said, in a very abusive way, your child is very-- the expression is in Polish that I cannot translate into English.

She said, your child looks exactly like a [? Å»ydÅ¼ak ?] Can I say it in Polish? Will it register with any of you or with whoever is going to see it? You know Pani Helena. See? Your child looks exactly like a-- in an abusive way-- a Jewish child. You see? A Jewish child. [? Å»ydÅ¼ak ?] You know?

And I said, the funniest part is, he isn't a [? Å»ydÅ¼ak ?] Maybe he looks like it a little bit, but who doesn't have a little bit of Jewishness in ourselves, I said. I don't know. If I go back, back, back, back to generation, maybe I have some. Maybe you are maybe having some Jewishness.

The same lady, she just took some pleasure in persecuting me. I don't know, to make me feel bad.

This is Wanda?

No, no, no, no. His cousin. StaÅ»ek, StaÅ»ek was Wanda's husband. Because he was, as I said, the foreman of my late husband. Rafael was his name. My big grandson carries his name. Rafael Mendelman is his name, my grandson's. Yeah, she came once, and she said, you know what's going on in Krakow, in the ghetto?

They're dragging out all the Jews. They're liquidating all the ghetto. They're smashing the heads of the little babies. They're tearing them apart by their legs. There is such a bloodbath. And they know that all the children, they know that-- in trucks, in open trucks, the little ones, the big ones, and whoever was yelling or crying, they were beating those children.

And they took them to a greenery, a place, and they covered them with-- I don't know how this is called in English. It's some kind of a [? calc ?] that is burning if you pour water on it that's boiling. We used it in Poland. We used it for painting kitchens, very primitive painting kitchens. You dissolve it with water, and you paint the kitchens with brooms, you see, or the [INAUDIBLE] so to speak, the [INAUDIBLE] the poor peoples, peasants.

So they took all those children and loaded them, and they put that stuff-- I don't know how this is called-- wapno in Polish, wapno. And they sprinkled all there the children with, and they put on the living children, they poured water. And she told me that it was bubbling. The children were alive, and it was like boiling the children alive. In Krakow. You see? Maybe even the people there didn't know about it.

But I knew about it, and that's when I fainted-- the first time in my life I fainted. And a few weeks later, it was in April, I had a dream that many Jews are sitting in Wanda's bedroom where I slept and my child slept-- she slept-- on benches around the wall.

And my husband was very-- how shall we say-- he wasn't-- he was very affectionate, but not ostentatious like today. He

thought that a woman should be a cook in the kitchen, a lady in the salon, and a lover in the bedroom. See? And he got up. His hair was all wet with perspiration.

And he came over to me, to the cot where I slept with my little boy, and kissed me with cold lips on my mouth. See? And I was lying there, and I didn't know what happened. I just couldn't give it a meaning, because I had the letter not long before from him, that last letter. That was the last letter that I burned.

And instead of keeping the Jewish workers until July, the SS came. Later, I was told what happened. I haven't received any more letters or any news, but I'll tell you right away. And this is later on I found out what really happened, you see? They circled all the five-- all five concentration camps. There was a [PLACE NAME] an [PLACE NAME] I don't know the names even.

And they were taking the Jews in March. The 18th of March it was. All the Jews took on the real concentration camps, like Skarzysko, Tschenstochau, Auschwitz, I don't know what else. And when it came to that labor camp or concentration camp that my husband worked and my brother-in-law, my only sister's husband, and another Jew, that foreman, with the inspector of that particular concentration camp, they send out those three, because they were labor-- lumber people, to a-- no-- lumber mill [INAUDIBLE] that was about 2 and 1/2 kilometers from where they were. I know where that camp was.

To load up-- and it was early morning. To load out some wagons with lumber. But they had to measure, and so he sent professional people. And when it came to count his people, they were missing three Jews. And he had to tell them where they are. He never expected for that what will happen. But I haven't been told the story for a long, long time what really happened. You see? But what I'm talking now about is I found it out later.

Well, they sent out-- the SS sent out with the navy police that was collaboration. The Navy police, Polish police, collaborated with the SS. And they went there together for those three poor Jews. And when they got there, they told them to run, and one was shot like a dog on the-- they had to jump fences, you see? One was shot right away in front of the fence. My brother-in-law was shot on the fence.

My husband jumped and ran the furthest. And they sent dogs after him, and the dogs brought him back and they shot him. And the story goes, when I came back to Sedzisz³w, you know? And I contacted that friend of ours, Mr. Yannik. He told me that they were all buried by the watchman of the lumber mill [INAUDIBLE] in a hole after a bump. You see? He showed me where. He couldn't understand. He later on complained to my brothers. They couldn't understand that I didn't shed one single tear. See?

But going back to Wanda's, that was the end of the three Jews-- innocent Jews that tried to work their way to live, see, in order to live.

Who witnessed this?

Mr. Yannik. Mr. Yannik. And the laborers from the limber mill. See? They saw it all. And Mrs. Yannik. Yeah. And they gave the-- yeah, they told the wachter-- they told the watchman, the night watchman of the lumber mill, they told him that he can strip all the Jews and carry off their clothes.

And Mr. Yannik told me that there was a tree, and he found some pictures and he nailed them to the tree. My husband apparently carried some pictures with him, you see? And he nailed them to the tree. And that's where he showed me. He measured exactly where they were buried later. He was the witness, and he wanted to tell us all, whoever-- if ever anyone survived.

But after that, one day-- I didn't know. I didn't know at Wanda's that they are not alive. It was at the end of April. He came home in the middle of the night-- apparently, he could-- and knocked on the window. And Wanda let him in. StaÅek you know? She let him in.

And it was in the morning that he told me, Mrs. Helena, you have to go away. You have to go away. Something

happened when we were at work. Your husband had a letter. He lied, had a letter prepared to send through me. He brought me those letters when he came for weekend sometimes. Or Wanda went there and she saw him and they spoke.

And whatever he could, he gave her for me and for the baby. If it was a cheese or something, or anything he could spare or could exchange or something, he always sent through that man. Or some clothing or some money. Well, I don't know how much he paid him or if he paid him. In what way he paid him, I have no idea.

But he came and he said, when we were at work, they went through the things, what the prisoner said, and they found your husband's letter between-- to you. And you have to escape. You have to go because we're all going to die. Later on, I found out actually what it was, how it-- excuse me-- how it actually happened.

They found it. They found the letter on my husband-- my husband's clothes, you see? And it was addressed of all people to his wife. You see? Maybe he tried to send me a letter behind his back or something. I don't know because I never got the letter. And that watchman, a Pole, denounced his brother, a Pole, to the police, to the Navy police. You see?

And they arrested StaÅnek. They arrested, but he took off his boot. He took off-- he had a jacket or a coat, a leather coat. He gave them all that and whatever else he gave them. They let him go. And he came rushing home with the first train the minute they let him go to get rid of us, you see?

And I immediately-- at that time, my brother that was in the same labor camp escaped from the camp and went to Warsaw to Kalina's grandmother. Did I tell you that? No. Yeah. Rena was already there, my sister-in-law. My sister-in-law. His wife.

What is the name of this brother that you--

Pardon? My brother? Carl.

Can you tell that story?

Pardon.

Tell that story.

Shall I tell you that about?

Yes.

I didn't know how. You see, my sister-in-law and the two boys escaped through Kalina, through Kalina, my girlfriend from grammar school that we sat together on one bench. And we were very close friends. She was Catholic. But I went to her holidays to her house. She came to my holidays. And we were just like sisters. Just like sisters. More. We were so close.

Through her grandmother-- I guess we can thank her, but she is not alive, passed away a long time ago. Had a bad heart. She took in my sister-in-law and the two children, and later on my brother. But my brother couldn't stay with them, so he was in Warsaw. I'll tell you when we get to it. He stayed with, later, two women that later I stayed with. It's so complicated that you can hardly follow. It's very, very difficult.

But anyway, right away the next morning, I telegraphed my brother that Helena is very, very ill, mortally ill. And the same day, I had a man from Warsaw-- not direct in Warsaw. Warsaw was much, much more patriotic and independent and helpful than Krakow. Krakow was always more anti-Semitic.

But anyway. Have any one of you read Schindler's Ark?

Uh-uh.

Please do read it. It's about a German that saved many thousands of Jews in his particular way. And it's written by a Australian. Anyway, I packed up and we went to the station to Krakow. And that was already April of '43. What I want to mention that I went-- on Easter, I went to a church nearby, a little church. I still remember it very vividly, not far away from Wanda. I'm going back, but it's important, to me anyway.

And we went to pray on Easter. And I knelt down. I knew how to cross myself, and I prayed. I maybe didn't say the right words, but I prayed my own way. And I was thinking, no matter to who I pray, but I'm praying. And later on, the priest had a sermon, and I will never forgive him in my heart. Never I forget that how he spoke about those poor burning Jews right there in Plaszow next to that Prokocim.

And I remember they were throwing oats, wild oats they were throwing at the population. And I say, well, I'm in God's hands, and whatever will happen will happen. But what a pity. What a tragedy to speak like that about the poor people that have no way of helping themselves.

I mentioned it many things I know that the people that were concentrated in concentration camps or labor camps or ghettos so could know that what I experience, you see? I tell you another-- while I was traveling from Krakow of the Warsaw, what a nun said. A nun! Religious people should be full of compassion and full of goodwill and full of-- I don't know.

Sometimes I don't want to judge anyone because I don't know being in their shoes, whoever was acting the wrong way, how I would respond. I don't know. Under the circumstances-- it's very hard to judge, and I don't want to be a judge of theirs, whoever did bad things to my people. But I'm going back to the traveling.

We were so, I don't know, alert that I asked the man sit-in a different coupe. You understand? In a different compartment, and take my luggage. I left very little luggage with me, with myself. And in the compartments, there were different people traveling, one lady that I knew. Because I had to cross, of all places, Siedziszew, Kielce, Siedziszew, from Krakow.

Siedziszew, Chęciny We came to Chęciny There was a nun in that compartment. And she said, at least we got rid of all those stinking Jews and their goats. OK? And the lady that I knew, she was a sister of an engineer, local engineer in Siedziszew. And he built for himself and for her a beautiful villa. It was a masterpiece that all the neighbors and all the whole population went to see it.

I remember a remark I made. How can you keep it so clean and so orderly? And he said, it's an art. The first-- in that particular town, the first villa that had a roof not slanted.

Flat.

Flat, a flat roof, and a garden on top. You see? It was very new. But anyway.

How did you happen to be traveling with her?

Pardon?

How did you happen to be traveling with her? How did you happen to be in the same compartment with her?

I don't know. We just went into a apartment. She was there. She didn't recognize me. She did not. That was a blessing. And they started talking. And there was another Jewish lady that I knew. And I didn't pretend that-- I didn't pretend that I don't know her. And I didn't pretend that I know her. I didn't-- I know her, and I know she was from Kielce.

And she said to me-- a Jewish lady, mind you-- I'm not going to spare anyone. She said to me-- and I was dealing with her too sometime. They had a haberdashery. Can you say that? Fabrics. She said, you look so much like a Jew, you shouldn't travel.

And that lady next to me that played with my baby, she says, oh, you shouldn't say that. Ms. Pavelski was arrested in ChÄ™ciny because she looks exactly like a Jewish lady. That lady doesn't look Jewish. Why are you saying that? You see? I didn't answer. What am I going to answer? What will I say? What can I say? You look more Jewish than I? So I kept quiet. I didn't comment on it. See?

Well, after we passed Kielce, we passed ChÄ™ciny we passed Kielce, and we come further and further, and I pray, God, please let that get to Warsaw. Let me just pray that. There comes in SS. And some spoke Polish. And they said in a bad Polish, all the people up. Get up. I took my beautiful little boy and I put him in front of the window. There is like a board.

I don't know where I had the-- I was so fresh, direct. I put him on that board in front of the window. And they asked me, what is in it? What in this? And I said, this is mine, but not in German, in Polish. And what do you have there? I said, some food and some clothes. And that's it. They didn't open it. They left.

How do you explain that? See? And that lady had the gall to say that I looked Jewish. You see? Anyway, we go to Warsaw. From exhaustion and from tension and from everything else, while we were walking out from the railroad station, I fell on the stairs. I hurt my knees. But it was very, very pleasant. It was pleasant.

I was breathing. I got out of that compartment of that train. We took a fiacre again together with that gentleman. And he said that he will take me where I have a place to stay. He knew. He knew that I'm Jewish, you see? He was a communist, a good communist. See? And apparently, my brother paid him.

And I came up, and there was a lady, a disaster with two beautiful teenagers, a girl and a boy. And the husband was living together with my Kalina's grandmother. And I'm coming to a very tragic turn in my life. And I'll try to be brave. I just can't go into details.

And he worked in a tank factory in Orzysz, but he was a saboteur. And that's why he lived with Kalina's grandmother too and my brother and their two children. When I was there, that lady worked in a vegetable place, and she was stealing because she had, I don't know, pockets made in her aprons. And she used to bring a carrot or a couple of potatoes, and we ate together.

I paid them. I had some money at that time. My husband. I had money, and I paid for the room and bought together, 1,200 zloty. I didn't have much, but I had some money. And I had my diamond ring. Everything went. [LAUGHS] Well, maybe it had to be that way. I don't have any sentiment for any jewelry, you see. I have rings, and I don't wear them. I have arthritic hands and I can't wear rings. Not one fits! Two years ago, they still fit on those two fingers, but now they don't fit and I'm not wearing them.

But anyway. And one Sunday-- I was there for, I don't, two or three weeks already. And one Sunday, there was a knock at the door, and Mr. [PERSONAL NAME] he was a captain in the army. Or was he a colonel? I don't know, in the Polish army. He was a very high official in the army, and also a saboteur-- very, very great patriot, very nice man.

And he came in, and his feet were so torn because he walked miles and miles and miles, turning around because he was afraid that he might be caught. And his wife gave him a bucket of water to soak his feet. And he was sitting and soaking his feet, and I was in the kitchen dressed, and I was brushing my little boy's hair.

And there is no knock on the door, and police comes in. And Captain [PERSONAL NAME] thought that they are coming for him, but they came for me. And my child runs around, runs around those policemen, and he said, I want that robber stick, I want that robber stick! You see? I don't know how fate puts words in the mouths of babes, of little children.

And one of the policemen said, you get dressed. A navy policeman. "You get dressed," to me. And I still had my fur coat. I put on my fur coat and my hat. And I said, shall I dress my child too? He says, no. The child you may leave. And I say, you can take me I don't know where. You can take me to the guillotine for all I care if the child can remain. Well,

I was arrested. And I went through a great deal.

Were you denounced?

Hmm?

Had you been denounced?

Was I what?

Had you been denounced?

Yes. Not I. You see, my brother came. My sister-in-law came. And there was too much traffic. You understand? When I came back-- and I came back. I came back. I don't know. It's the second miracle of-- I don't know how many miracles there are in my life. The [PERSONAL NAME] they felt a little bit more secure, and they said nothing but she--

How do you say it when you are killed and you wake up again? Resurrected. See? My child was not with them, but in a different family. And he found me a place that Captain [PERSONAL NAME] risky. And we went out, and he carried the baby. He carried the baby, and I followed. We had to take the electric train to Orzysz, where the tank factory was.

I was in terrible shape. Terrible. But I was young. And I saw the Warsaw Jews marching to work. It was before the uprising, just before the uprising of the Warsaw ghetto in 1943. It was very, very bad in Warsaw that time, all over, you know? It was the final decision, the year of the final decision of the Jewish solution. Jewish solution.

And we took the train and we went there. And we were-- I was so scared. I was so scared to get out after that, very, very scared. But nevertheless, I was still living. And after, I don't know, maybe a month, maybe May or so-- it was nine months that we were there-- my brother brought Fred, my nephew, my older nephew, his older son.

They lost their hiding place, you see? They put their child with some other family where I stayed later, with Mrs. Opalinski. And they-- I don't know. He was on the roof-- under the roof in the attic, in the straw, my brother. And she went for-- oh, she was so courageous, Rena. She could do-- believe me, I couldn't do. She had a real chutzpah. You understand? A real chutzpah.

There were two sisters in San-- in-- "San Francisco." In Sedzisz³w. And I don't know why. I think they were Volksdeutsche. And my sister-in-law knew them. And they were in Warsaw, and they had connections with the Gestapo men. They had lovers, Gestapo. And she went there, and she became their maid. Yeah! Rena, my sister-in-law from Tel Aviv. Yes.

And through them, I sold my diamond ring. And I had to pay for my roof over my head and for food. I didn't go out shopping. God forbid. And I sold my fur coat to them. They bought it, my gold powder compact, things that were valuable. Whatever valuables I had, I sold to keep, because I paid.

I paid for every soup 50 zloty. To shop for a bread, a pound of bread was 18 zloty on the black market. And I used to divide a pound of bread for three people for three meals. How do you do that? I don't know anymore how I did it. They had also a goat.

We were on the [? veranda, ?] did I mentioned that, for months and months and months. And I was allowed at night to carry out extremities after the children and myself. I had a big iron pot, and I was crawling out. Well, my brothers escaped. My two brothers, Joseph and Aaron escaped from the labor camps. They helped me a little bit later.

They sent me a bread, and inside was a little piece of butter. They took out the-- dig a hole in the bread and put in a-- but we came-- it came all moldy and smelly. And I used to cook that, and I asked the lady for a piece of onion to get the smell away from the butter and the taste. And I cooked it, and that we ate. And it was very precious.

And sometimes my brother came. It was winter. And my brother sometimes came and brought-- no, that was summer. What I'm talking about? Yeah. I'm skipping something very important. They were not very happy to have us, you see? And I didn't have where to go. And I contacted Lily in Ojców, you know?

I don't quite remember what happened that I went to Krakow, and the fur coat was in Krakow and Wanda's supposed to sell it. And I went with her walking-- mind you, they didn't allow me to stay one single day with them-- walking the 30 kilometers to Ojców. And on that way, she fixed me sandwiches and a pot of-- thermos of coffee or tea. "Coffee." Who had coffee in Poland?

It was a miracle if you-- ground up some, you know, we burnt first some wheat kernels, and we grounded them-- grinded them. And from that, we used to make coffee. And finally, in the halfway, she said, oh, Helena, oh, Helen, oh, Helena, how can you stand it? How can you stand-- I was stopping. There was a little-- and that was after the arresting, you see? After the arrest.

It was August again. It was August again. '43. August '43. How I picked myself up and went to Wanda to sell that fur coat is behind my comprehension. It's behind me. But I recall it, that it was there, that I lived through it. And I couldn't stay with her. Under no circumstances could I stay with her, so she took me half way, about 15 kilometers.

And we were walking with the valley, and there was a little-- how do you say it an English? [NON-ENGLISH]-- you know, like a little river in the mountains. That was a mountainous country. A brook, yeah? Clean water. And I was washing myself every few kilometers. And I remember that I met-- not a priest, but in a habit, a brown habit, a man. And he crossed himself and he said in Polish a greeting about Christ in Polish.

[SPEAKING POLISH] And I answered [SPEAKING POLISH] and I told him-- and I also crossed myself. And I marched and I went. And I came to Lily's house, and Lily's house was empty. Nobody was there. I sat down in the kitchen. I was so relieved. It was so cool in the kitchen, like today. And they just practically jumped out of their skin when they saw me.

But they put me up in an attic place, in an attic. And he promised, Kałk said he doesn't know what happened with Ivonia He doesn't know what, where Marusha went. But he said, he will go and get me my child. They will keep me. They will find me a place, they promised. But nothing came out of that promise.

During the harvest-- August is harvest season most of the places in Poland. They forgot about me for three days. They didn't give me a drop of water. I was on the cot, practically dried out, dehydrated. I had the rusty pushka, a rusty container where I went with my urine. I tried to drink it. Yes!

At night, I crawled out of the straw mattress and I went-- there was a window, but I was not allowed to go to the window. So I put my tongue to the glass panel to cool off. And later on, they apologized and apologized, but apologies-- you see, I saw that I don't have on who to count anymore. You understand? The tragedy was great.

And I said, Lily, please. I gave her whatever clothes I could spare. Please, take that. I have not much money. I just have 500 zloty left to go back. And I want to rest up. Please give me some food every day, because I want to feel a little better to leave your house. I'm grateful. It took a month, you see?

And I got myself-- my dress was navy blue with white, and a hat again, and flat-heeled shoes that I wore for my pregnancy I still had. And one day, I picked myself up whatever clothes I had, and I started walking back. And I don't know how I didn't, that they didn't arrest me because I walked not with the valley. I walked with the road.

And I just gave up. Whatever will happen will happen. It just-- it wasn't bearable anymore. Maybe some people had it tougher in the concentration camps, but that personal tragedy of mine was so great for me. For me. Maybe for somebody else, maybe people looked at it from a different point of perspective.

But for me, the pain was so excruciating, the emotional pain, the heartache, the degradation, that I cannot show my face. I cannot be me. I have to remember all the time, when I see a cross, to cross myself. If somebody sees that I don't do,

maybe they will denounce me or something.

I came finally to Krakow, and I didn't know where I am. See? I went to-- they have-- very old, beautiful city. They have in those buildings big, huge gates. And I went into-- at night, they close up those gates for the night. But during the day, the gates are open. And I went into one of those gates to dust myself off because I was at least that conscious that I'm dusty and smeared, probably, with perspiration, sweat.

And I wiped my face, and I went out and I remember I was under the Sukenitsa. It's a famous market place. And I saw the cathedral. There's a famous cathedral, the [INAUDIBLE] I forgot. Anyway. And I didn't know what I-- I didn't know which bus or which street car I have to take to go back to Wanda, if she sold my fur coat.

I didn't know. I didn't know where I am, and I knew the city well. And at that time when I was so scared and felt so trapped, I saw a lady walking by with, the same age of my baby, a little boy. A baby. A little boy, three, four years old. And I still remember what the child was wearing today. She led him by his hand.

And I didn't know if she's German or Polish or whoever she was. And I stepped to her, and I apologized, and if she can tell me-- I begged her, please, can you tell me which street I have to take to Prokocim, you see, to that part of town? And she says, I don't-- [NON-ENGLISH] I don't understand any Polish.

And I was thinking at that moment, my God, what right does that child have to live and mine doesn't? Why can God be so cruel? There is my baby, my child that I gave life to in Warsaw. I don't know if in the attic or on the veranda on the whole. Why doesn't that have a right to live like that baby?

And that flashed through my mind. Would I be able, if I have a knife, to plunge into that baby? I said, no way. That I wouldn't do. Absolutely not. I have never been and I won't be a killer. And I wouldn't be. And what does it-- what would it give me? You see? I was talking to my-- what would that give me? A spot on my whole life, on my whole human being. Hatred cannot go on forever.

So what did I do again? I took a dorozka for the last \$500. I said, at least it will take me to Wanda. I was that conscious. And I saw again Jews walking with shovels and with everything, and with those wooden plaques, wooden, wooden little boards. No, like that, boards. "Jude." And with the yellow stars on the backs and on guard.

And somehow, I came and I asked the driver of the carriage to stop at the church, at that little church, because I didn't want him to know where I'm going in case he's suspecting me of being Jewish or something. Or something! I went down and I went into that little church, and I sat down and I cooled off. And I said, I'll proceed by foot later. I'm so tired. Please let me rest a minute, I said to whoever was there.

Whoever is God, whoever has pity, please pity me. Let me rest a minute here and lay down. I proceed to Wanda. And Wanda wasn't there. So there was a garden made in the time that I wasn't there anymore. They planted a big garden with sunflowers, and the sunflowers are almost ripe. And they were in beautiful big flowers.

And I sat there on the ground waiting for Wanda to return home. And when she returned, she was jumping out of her skin, but her husband wasn't there. It was a good thing. And I said, Wanda, no matter what, I have nowhere to go. But you have my fur coat, and maybe you have some other stuff of mine. I would appreciate if you give--

No, I went-- I took the pillows to sell at the [INAUDIBLE] or somewhere, and they stole it from me. OK. It doesn't matter, I said, but can you at least bed me down for the night? I have-- you have to send for me. You have to go to the post office for me and sent a telegram. I didn't want to risk myself the fur coat, you see?

I was thinking of the babies, in case I should perish or be arrested or sent away, and maybe the babies can stay for a while from the fur coat. It was a beautiful, seal skin with mink, with gray mink. Black seal skin with gray mink. Anyway. So she said, OK, I bed you down, and OK, I'll go right away to the post office, and OK, but calm down. She had pity. She had a heart. You cannot deny her that she didn't have a heart.

And she said, it's a good thing that StaA>ek isn't here. When he starts drinking, he is not good. He drank a lot. Anyway. She sent a telegram to those people to send their son-in-law, that Helena is expecting your son-in-law, this-and-this address, and this-and-this. He came. He came the next morning. You see?

And at night-- in the afternoon, late afternoon, as long that there were no curfew, he took my coat and whatever, but the things. And Wanda gave me some money for a ticket because I didn't have money. The last \$500 I spent on the fiacre, on the dorozka.

And there was so much SS on that station, and I told them to stay away. His name was also Kajic He was dark, tall. Their daughter's son-- husband. They're daughters of Kajic. And he worked in the factory too, in the tank factory. I didn't say anything about the ghetto uprising. I have to go back.

But maybe I just come to the finish of that journey. OK? Or do you want me to go back now, because--

Don't worry about-- I'll ask you about the ghetto uprising.

Please, yes, because it's very important, to me. Anyway. We came, and because I worked so much-- no. On the train, I asked him to take a separate compartment with the suitcase. I was sitting. I didn't have a place in the compartment. In no compartment could I find a place. I sat in the hall.

And I had my-- Wanda gave me again-- I remember like today-- dark bread with scrambled egg sandwiches and a thermos of tea. And it was maybe midnight, whatever. I don't remember. I remember it was dark. It was dark. And the trains were dark, traveling at night. Dark. Did we go in the evening or-- in the evening I think we went. Yeah, in the evening, in the late afternoon.

As I said there were so much Gestapo and so many dogs, and no one came to me to sniff me. You see? Here you are! Miracles. Well, he sat in a different compartment, and I sat in the hallway, in the hall, in that walk-through in the train. And there was a little seat that you could take it out from the train, from--

And I sat there, and SS comes on the train. And they lit with their flashlight into my face, and they-- [NON-ENGLISH] So I gave him my ticket. Kennkarte. I take out the Kennkarte, and I give it to him. Not open but closed. You see? So he threw it away. It didn't open, you see?

And what I did before-- I saw them when they were asking for the Kennkartes. And I saw them in [INAUDIBLE] I saw them first. So I took out my sandwich, calm and cool, and poured tea into a cup, and I was eating. I was eating. You see? I don't know how I was not choking, but I was eating. And they left.

To seem casual?

Yeah. I don't know how I did it. I probably couldn't do it again ever. Ever. It's not me. It wasn't me. I don't know. I don't know. I was so casual, like nothing. Like nothing. And we came to Warsaw, and we had to-- he didn't want to travel with the streetcar because I was a mess. So we went with Polish roads, very, very difficult spaces to walk.

And I had my shoes on. And we came finally to their villa, to their house in Orzysz. And I came to the little hallway underneath on the first floor, and there were stairs to the attic. And there were the two children standing up there on the landing, naked both of them. It was so hot, so excruciatingly hot.

Don't remember if it was noon or morning. I took off the shoes, and my feet were all bloody and full of blisters. And I couldn't walk up. And that baby said, mommy, did you really come back? Did you really come back? And I kneeled up to him on my knees. The child was-- all this month he was sick.