

Seven or eight seconds.

So as I was saying, I remember the pictures in the ghetto, the people in the streets. And it was a different world than what I saw when I came out of the ghetto, because on the other side, there were people were walking in the street. And they were dressed in normal clothes. And people were walking hand-in-hand. And there were children. And it was just different, totally different.

Had your hair grown out by then?

Oh, yes. Yes. There, when they shaved my head, that was so a few years before that, yes. Yeah.

And how about the lice? Did you have to get rid of the lice?

I think so. Yes, my mother was really looking after me. Every chance she had, she would scrub me. I would cry and I would scream, because she-- especially my hair, she would comb it so often, it was so very thick, and she-- that soap, it was big soap, laundry soap.

And it was cold. It was freezing. And it was an open kitchen, open room some place, all stripped naked. And it was not, I guess, the most pleasurable experience with people walking back and forth. And so I was many times rebelling.

But basically, I think I was a very good kid. And I behaved, I guess, like a grown up, more or less. And I cooperated with my mother. I was not mischievous, because there was no time for such thoughts.

I just remember, on the rare occasions, where I wanted so much to play and I wanted to be with other children. And when the opportunity came up and there were other kids around, we would invent some kind of a game, and play a little bit, and be like children for a while.

But most of the time-- and this lasted a very short time at the beginning in the ghetto-- for the rest of the time until we escaped, I don't remember having contact with any children at all. This game that I told you about in that episode when I stole the honey, this was all much earlier, at the beginning. After that, there was nobody around.

It sounds like you had no childhood at all, practically.

No, no I didn't. No, not at all. The only childhood that I was able to recapture a little bit-- well, quite a lot, actually-- was in Germany. But it was a very lonely childhood. I was always by myself. But I was in a dream world. And I will tell you about that.

Yeah.

But I also forgot to tell you about that time when mine-- when my mother's brother passed away in our apartment. Now, he also-- my mother's only brother, he had typhus. And he was recuperating already. And so he walked to my mother to come with the hope that she could feed him a little bit. He came to eat something.

And he came. And he slept on the bed in the kitchen. And he was still very sick, I remember. And my mother-- we didn't have anything. We had this sauerkraut that my father brought sometime earlier. And so she opened that can of sauerkraut. And he ate that. And that was the only thing we had.

And he was very, very sick. And few days later, he died. And they came to the house. And they took his body. And they threw it on a communal wagon with the other bodies that were collected.

Your mother took care of you when you had typhus. And she took care of--

And she didn't get any.

And she never--

And she didn't get sick. No. My mother was never sick in the ghetto. She did get sick later. She told me, when I was grown up already, she told me that she stopped menstruating. And doctors told her because of malnutrition.

And she had a problem with the joints in her hand. She developed sores that wouldn't heal from malnutrition. And eventually, it healed. But she had a couple fingers-- two, three fingers that remained--

Stitched?

--crooked-- crooked, yeah.

How about your health after the time you went to Germany? Were you--

Excuse me.

--was your body healthy? Were you having nightmares or any other kinds of problems from your living in the ghetto?

I don't remember being sick.

No.

I don't remember being sick.

Except for the typhus.

Right. This my mother said earlier. I don't even remember that, it was much earlier, at the very beginning, I think, maybe, of the war. And I don't remember anything about that.

Do you remember about your father before he left?

My father? You mean in the ghetto, what he did, or how he lived? We spent very little time with my father. I don't remember seeing him around. Right from the beginning, he would-- I don't know what he was doing to make some living or bring some food home. And I would see him sporadically.

And I don't remember. I just remember this few times, that time when we came back from the Umschlag, somehow, he was in another location we were. And we separated. And they took us to the Umschlagplatz and how he greeted us in the street, thank god, you're alive. And he ran toward us. And I remember his stretched arms and that white shirt, open-collar shirt. And I cried.

Was that a rule, to have an open-collared shirt like that?

I think so. I think so. I don't think I ever saw anybody. People were dressed basically in very dark clothes, and trying to keep warm, and overcoats, and jackets, and wintertime hats. This is the only way I remember my father-- that time, that day, and that open-collar sort of a shirt like that, with sleeves pulled up and open collar. I can't remember other instances.

Another thing that seems very clear is that you were your mother's companion. In some ways, you were almost like equals--

Yes.

--even though you were a child.

Yes. Most of the time, starting in the ghetto, when I got a little bit older, I remember, my mother would say everything to me. I mean, she would express all her thoughts, and all her fears, and all her pain, and everything. She would just say it out loud. I don't know if it was to me or she would just say it.

And sometimes, I would respond. But I remember later, in Germany, I was definitely-- she told me everything-- how she felt and what she was afraid of. And she would share all her thoughts with me and everything that she knew. And she would tell me about all the conversation that she had with the Germans, with the neighbor, with the landlady. She told me everything.

And I always listened. I liked to listen to her. And I would absorb a lot of that and kind of never bring it up, never talk about it. But I would absorb everything and remember everything. I had a good memory.

Talk us through that.

I do have an excellent memory even now.

Yes.

And so sometimes, I'm amazed about the details that I remember.

It's true, even listening to you.

And site and weather-- I remember weather also, and especially in Germany, wintertime, how beautiful it was, and with the snow, and the river that was frozen in some places.

Well, that sounds like a good place to start next time, is--

All right.

--your life in Germany and maybe the weather.

Sure. Do you have anything that you want to?

I think we got all the things I wanted to talk about.

OK, great. OK. Now, thank you for telling the story.

Thank you.

Get that place next time.

OK. All right, thanks.