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ROVING COURT REPORTER

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1 INTERVIEW WITH: Olga Zeleny
2 INTERVIEWER: (Unknown)
3 DATE: (Unknown)
4 PLACE: (Unknown)
5 TRANSCRIBER: Peggy Canterbury
6

7 Q And where were you born?

8 A Tissaula, Czechoslavkia.

9 Q What year?

10 A 6/12/22.

11 Q 1922. So when--when did you first begin to experience
12 the effects of the Nazi occupation?

13 A Well, when we got occupied when -- First, was
14 Czechoslovakia; then it's changed to Hungary. And--

15 Q That was in '39?

16 A '39, yeah. And then in forty -- It was the last
17 transport. Which is the year now? I'm confused. I
18 just remember at one big--for Passover morning all of a
19 sudden our house was surrounded with the German tanks
20 with the SS mens walking around with dogs. And we was
21 very frightened. We couldn't even--afraid to talk to
22 each other in the house. We tiptoed. We put on
23 kerchiefs and tried to, you know, stay inside and we
24 don't know what's going on. Come very sudden. So all
25 of a sudden I see that they knock on the door, the

neighbor's door, and they said, "Pack everything you have," the Germans, "and line up." And then come to our house and the same thing they said. So I remember that my mother take off the bedspread and put in the candelabra and some clothes, whatever we had. And then line up wagons with horses and by the couple of families they put on the wagon and took us to the ghetto. But this was about half an hour from our house.

Q What was the ghetto?

A Nach Soelig.

Q Nach-- ?

A Soelig, yeah, the ghetto. And we was there a couple of months and--

Q Where did you live in the ghetto?

A In ghetto?

A Uh-huh.

Q In--in--you know, the ghetto was -- One part of Soelig was barricaded up and the gathered--made a ghetto. A few streets just was closed down and was -- I don't remember the name of the street. But one part of the ghetto that was a lot of old apartment houses, and we live about--in one room about ten, twenty families even.

Q How large was your family?

A I had my mother, my father, my sister and me, and my brother's wife was there with the baby. And we stayed

together and then we stayed there about three months. It was very tough. We don't have food enough and--but luckily, you know, was the working Lager, boys who -- You know, the Jewish boys, they wasn't taken to Army, they was taken as a working Lager. And they was stationed there and they find out that we are there so they bring in packages.

Q And that was how you got food?

A Food, yes.

Q From the boys who would leave to go to work camps?

A Would leave the camp, yes. So they bring it in and, you know, through the fences they give us. And we was there and then about, you know -- Actually my transport was the last one. People was before us, so they already know what is doing, you know, how you can get something. And it was very difficult, you know.

Q Where were you transported to?

A I was transported from there to Auschwitz. Then they, you know, we went to the--in a big Schule. They take away everything what we had, the little what we had. We just had on the shoes and whatever, you know, we had. They take away what we bring, the candelabra. All this in a Schule. And they took us and they boarded the train, the wagon where they close down the wagons, you know. I don't remember, you know, where we take the wagon. Anyhow they stuffed us into the wagons and was straw on the floor

and the SS man stand there and he just pushed us in like animals, just pushed us in. My mother, you know, she couldn't step up so it was difficult, so given a push she fall into the wagon. And then all the commotion, the whole day was just -- It was a tremendous long wagon. And then--

Q This was a wagon, not a train?

A No, it's like the animal, what -- How they call it? They transfer the animals in there.

Q Cart or a wagon?

A Not a wagon. How they call it. Train--

Q Cattlecars?

A Cattlecars, yeah. That's what I meant. Cattlecars, yeah. And just was so filled up there wasn't time--place to even move. All the elderly people, younger people, sick peoples, crying and screaming, the kids, you know. And--

Q The women and the men were together?

A Everybody. Was children with no--excuse my expression--no, no -- Water right away and no toilet facilities, anything. So people was sick and it was just impossible, the smell. And they closed the wagon and we stayed there till the wagon just left about in, late in the night. And we stayed there on the station in the wagon just -- And people was--get sick and fainted and just--just was a nightmare.

Q Did you stay together with your mother and your father and your--

A Yes. We stayed in a corner, me, my mother and my father and and my sister and my sister-in-law with the five-year-old little boy. My brother left in the working Lager, you know. They took him as workers, not as soldiers. And we didn't know about him, where he was. We don't hear about him. So we went to the -- I have two brothers. I went to the Lager, and I didn't know where they are and we didn't hear no -- My parents didn't know he's alive or dead when we left. We didn't know about the brothers. So when we went -- And then they closed the wagon and we started out and was driving about till the next day and we don't see anything. You know, just the little window what is on these freight cars, the little sun came in, otherwise it was dark and smelly and people was screaming and crying and they don't feel good. Excuse me. They throw up. They make there everything, so it was just impossible. So the next day, like, so the afternoon they open the door and they put in a barrel of water, so everybody run into the water, each other. You know, we tramped each other to get to the water, so the SS man hit people with the gun. He says--he says--make the remark, "Verfluchte Juden. Verfluchte Juden." And--

Q And what does that mean?

A That's a curse, you know, like a curse. German, "verfluchte." So and then they closed down the wagon and we went days and days.

Q A week? Two weeks?

A It was about a week, about five or six days, I think. And they usually opened the door and give us water but nothing else.

Q No food?

A No food. But, you know, we had something with us. Maybe the third day, yeah, they throw in some bread. And when we arrived to Auschwitz and I -- They everybody loose, everybody out, so we lined up: my mother, my father, you know. They said five in a line, so we lined up. I lined up with my mother, father, and--

Q Five across?

A Five across, yes. And my sister-in-law hold the baby. So Mengele was there, you know, the selector.

Q Mengele who is dead?

A Yeah, who is dead. And we lined up five. So he give a grab for my father and my mother and put it on the left side. You know what means the left side? So we start to scream. And so there was already people who was there. He says, "Don't scream;" said, "You just stay on your place." Who knows already, you know, the helpers, who knows what's going on, said, "You just stay on your place. Don't cry; better off, you see; let your parents go." We don't know what they meant.

Q You didn't know what that meant at the time?

A At the time, yeah. Don't know that left, you know, is the gas chamber. So my sister-in-law stayed with me

and my sister and hold the baby. So they grabbed the baby and give her to my parents. And my sister-in-law screamed, "I want my baby." Said, "You want baby, go with your baby." And they throw her with the baby -- So my mother and father. And me and my sister went to the right.

Q I thought your parents were selected--

A Left. Yes, they took on left.

Q And you and your sister?

A On the right.

Q On the right.

A Who was the left, they was in gas chamber.

Q Right. And the baby went with your parents?

A With my parents. And my sister-in-law -- They take the baby from my sister-in-law and they give her to my parents, because she was a young woman, you know, the younger. So she stayed with us, we three of us, but was screaming she wanted the baby. So he says, "Okay, you want to go, go with your baby." And they throw her to the left, too, with my parents. And so she went also in the gas chamber, my sister-in-law.

Q Your sister-in-law?

A Yes. So me and my sister went -- They took us in a--a-- a latrina, you know, because was no place. We lined up. It was so hot and was so screaming and we were running. And we didn't have no food, nothing. They lined us up

and the latrina had a stone floor and you had to stay in Appell the whole day. You know what is Appell? You stay in line.

Q Roll call?

A The roll call, yeah. And you know, some people just fainted. They just fall down. So the people also who were in the first transport, so they know what goes on, he says, "Don't you dare sit down." He says, "You want to get -- Stand up, stand up." So we keep up, you know, the people who can. But how much we can, you know. The people just was falling down like a whole day. And we didn't have--didn't give us eat because we didn't have place there. We stayed there three days in Appell. Three days on the latrina. And they don't give us food until the second day but only drink. And our lips, you know, from the heat and from the hunger. We don't have (unintelligible) . And people, you know, get sick from the smelling things. After three days they bring us to the shower, you know. It's a room where they delice you-- de--

Q Delouse you?

A Delouse you.

Q May I ask you one question? You used two words to describe roll call. One was Appell?

A Appell.

Q Can you spell it? Do you know how--

A A-p-p-e-l. Appell.

Q It sounds almost French.

A Not French, it's German.

Q Is it Czech? It's German. And the other was "latrina"?

A Latrina is the bathroom.

Q Bathroom. Oh, okay.

A You know, the toilet.

Q Yeah.

A The long -- They call it latrina because it's like --
You know, it's just cement and it's, you know--

Q Latrine.

A Latrine, yeah.

Q So you were in the latrine for roll call?

A In Auschwitz, yes. In--On this we stayed three days,
because we didn't have no barracks. We was the last
transport. And then they took us to this delicing, they
call it. They took us to take a shower. You have to
walk in. We thought is a gas chamber. We thought it's
going to be gas, you know, coming--

Q By now you had learned about the gas chamber?

A Oh, we know right away, because the people, you know, who
come and we see this tremendous--the mountain of shoes,
the mountain of hair. And you know, the people, the
girls with whom I know from my city, they were in the
early transport. They come on and started with, "Don't
ask questions, don't say anything, do what they say."
And I say, "Where is our parents?" She say, "Don't

ask questions." You know, they was trying, you know -- But they was trying to sneak us a little food or something to help. They was looking for somebody, you know. So we went to like the delousing. So they take off everything what we have in one room in front of a bench. SS woman stand around, you know, they were not beating you but rushing you into -- "Los, los. Go." And they take off everything; take away the shoes. They cut us hair. They spray us with some kind of petrol or some kind of disinfection. Then we went under the shower and then they give us the striped uniforms, yeah. And we don't stay in Auschwitz after this. They took us in another gathering Lager, Stutthof.

Q Were you tattooed for that?

A I wasn't tattooed, because we didn't have in Auschwitz a place. So you see, I don't even have a tattoo. Our transport--

Q What did you have? What kind of identification did you have?

A Acht-- We had a striped dress and we had a number here in yellow. I remember the number.

Q What was the number?

A 80485. Yeah. I remember was on our jackets. And we was in Stutthof.

Q You were taken by train?

A By -- No, no. We taken by a boat. Matter of fact, it was

a merchant boat because we just go on the bottom, down, and we all -- We was five-hundred girls about in all. You know, it was just all on the bottom. You can't see anything; looked like on the bottom of a (Unintelligible) . And they took us to Stutthof. And there they put us in barracks, about fifty in a barrack. And with three bunkers (unintelligible) . And then they give us eat, coffee and a little piece of bread. And we was there a couple a days. And we actually didn't do nothing, but they was crazy -- Barracks--the girls who take care of the barracks--

Q Kapos?

A Kapos, yeah. Middle of the night just for no reason, "Los, los; everybody out." And they come with the whips and everybody out, just no reason. It was crazy. And they was always on the go, they always drive you. All of a sudden they come in, on the yard you was standing (unintelligible) with the whip and whip everybody, you know.

Q Who was she?

A She was a Kapo. She was, you know, the Lager--

Q What was her nationality? Was she--

A German.

Q She was German?

A German, yes.

Q She wasn't Jewish?

A No, no, no. We don't have. This was German.

Q But weren't there also Jewish Kapos?

A Not--we didn't have Jewish Kapos. They all was German. Yeah. The helpers they had, but not really Kapos, like the helpers give out the food or something. But the Kapos we had, German or Polish.

And we stayed there in Stutthof a couple a weeks.

And then--

Q What did you do there?

A Actually in Stutthof we don't do nothing, because this was like a transfer Lager, you know. And we stayed there about a couple a weeks and then they gather us up and they took us to work for the Wehrmacht--for the Army. And we went to Poland. I don't know the place because we stayed outskirts. We never was in the city. They put us tents with -- They put straw on the floor and that was about twenty-five, thirty girls in a barrack--in a tent, I mean.

Q You worked in the munitions factory?

A No, no. We was working for the Air Force. We build air--airfields and Schützengraben, tank--against the tanks, you know, those ditches.

Q And what did you do?

A That's what we, you know, dig the holes--actually dig ditches, you know, that--against the tanks, you know, the big wide ditches what goes like this that the tank can't come. I don't know how they call it.

Q Was it for the tanks to hide or for the--

A No, they couldn't go over--

Q I see, okay.

A You know, they're very wide. And then we build those little Schützengraben--the Graben, that they run, you know, the soldiers. And we, you know, make those narrow. That's what we was working.

Q Show me what you actually did. Did you dig?

A Dig.

Q You dug?

A Yes, dig.

Q What did you dig with?

A Dig. They give us shovels and we dig -- You know, you make your way just like, you know, you make a ditch. And that's what we did morning and night. They take us in the morning and bring us back in the night.

Q What time did they--

A They come six o'clock till six o'clock. And they give -- In the morning they give us a cup of coffee with a piece of bread. And lunchtime they take the lunch to the field there and they give us a little water with something-- little sugarbeet in it. And in the night again coffee, which was at six o'clock. And, you know, very little to eat. But it was still was better to work for the Wehrmacht, you know, a little better. But they was constantly watching, the Air Force, day and night, and

with the dogs they watched us. You have to work and if you was sick, you know, that mean that you're dead.

Q They would shoot you?

A Yes, right away, yes. To get rid of them.

Q Women you were working with? Do you remember anybody who--

A Yes.

Q Can you tell me about someone you got to know?

A Well, I met a little girl, Faigi, and then we met, matter of fact, people from Hungvar. You hear from Hungvar? You know what is--Czechoslovakia, very nice city. We was together and -- But you see, my main concern was to stay -- Our main concern was for my sister and me to stay together. So you know, when they shifted the line, you know, people wanted to stay together. When they, you know -- So when the shifted the line, I jumped with my sister or my sister jumped with me. So you always changed people, because if somebody stayed out or was sick, they don't come -- They shifted the line like two people. So we just don't want to -- We completely lost our group, and we wind up with Lithuanian and Lithonian people.

Q Now, were you with your sister?

A All the time, yeah.

Q All the time.

A All the time with my sister.

Q That was very important.

A Very important. I wouldn't be surviving if I had not, you know. And we worked for the Wehrmacht most of the time, but they took us -- We was in Danzig, we was in Riga. In one we build the airfield and the Schützen-graben. That's what we most of the time worked on.

Q And you were there for how long?

A We was there almost to the end, but different places.

Q So you were transferred--

A Yeah, transferred. From Stutthof they took us to Riga and then to Danzig. And all this time we worked. I was a year there. But all this time we worked for the Wehrmacht. And then the end of it, you know, was very tough. I don't have to tell you. Probably you hear it, you know, that you see people and then, you know, it was winter. It was very cold. We didn't have -- We had wooden shoes and we didn't have coat, you know, so we wear the blanket, but we were not allowed to take the blanket to the work, you know.

Q But they gave you a blanket to sleep on--

A Blanket to sleep on on the straw. But the straw was -- Everybody was screaming in the night because the water went under the snow and it was freezing and you slept on it and everybody's back was aching and so it was just horrible. And sometimes the SS men got crazy and just for no reason just drive--in the middle in the night, snow like this, just so you was out and stay in Appell in

the snow without anything, middle of the night.

Q Middle of the night.

A Yeah. And that's how we were most through our whole stay in those Lagers.

Q A couple more questions to ask you.

A Sure.

Q Did you lose your menstruation?

A Yes. Yes. That was a terrible thing. Matter of fact, that was Stutthof. I don't know. They put, you know, something in the food, but we -- We started in Stutthof because we didn't--we was processed in -- We was in Stutthof processed. So you know, they put us in this boat and everybody was looked like a dog. Everybody's dirty and, you know, because everybody--you know, it wasn't in effect yet. We don't know what goes on, you know. So after -- Matter of fact, even that we looked so bad that they give us napkins.

Q Because you were bleeding?

A Bleeding. And, you know, everybody was bloody and there was just -- We looked horrible. So when we arrived to Stutthof, you know, so then already they clean up and then we don't have it no more.

Q They put something in the food?

A Put some food, yeah. After this we lost that.

Q How did you know? Did they tell you they put something in the food?

A No, no. Just -- You know, you don't even think. I mean, but we realized it must have something, you know, in it, but we don't know it, is the food or where, you know.

Q So nobody bled afterward?

A No, no. But it was such a scene, you know.

Q Did you ever see an abortion?

A No. I didn't.

Q Did you ever hear?

A No. It was mostly young, younger people our age here. I don't even know. I think about a couple of them that was married even in the camp. It was mostly young.

Q So they were women mostly fifteen to twenty?

A No, it was about, about -- Yeah, they was fifteen to twenty, twenty-two. Yeah. About a couple--a very few was there, who was there the mother. One, matter of fact, I met a very nice girl who was there with the mother and it was very difficult for them. One or two, because, you know, the mother couldn't work and they tried to help. Matter of fact, at the end of the evacuation this very nice friend of mine, I don't even know how they--what's their name. I know they was from Hungvar also. And the mother couldn't walk. And as we was walking, the mother kept falling down, so she helped her and she want to pick her up and the SS shoot them both and they both fall down in the snow, mother and

daughter. Young, beautiful, smart girl, full of life.
And you know, it's--

Q Was this a death march? No.

A No, it wasn't the death march. We was evacuating the Lager. This was the end of the war, you know, already.

Q And where were you taken?

A We don't know where we was taking, because the whole thing happened -- We was in--in -- From where we start out? Not from Riga. We start out -- Yeah, all of a sudden we was working and the next day we have to line up and has to evacuate the Lager. So as we was marching, you know, we stand over in farms. In the barns we stayed. And they give us the farm and they cooked us some potatoes in that farm. And they says, you know, says, "Where are you going?" Says, it's almost, you know, the end of war. So we don't know.

Q This was the winter, though?

A Winter, yes. Another -- A little girl was with us from Hungvar and there was three sisters. This was a little cousin, a doctor's daughter, was very, very -- This sister said that she was raised very, very over-protected. So you know, she had hallucination and she says, "Oh, I'm going to dress up," and she got crazy. You just watch her. A young kid getting crazy and she had grief and hallucination. And she was so hungry. And says, "Oh, I know I come home and I'm going--my mother going to

prepare me because she knows this is my favorite food." And she just completely got crazy so that the SS men shoot her, too, because she couldn't walk, she didn't listen, you know, at the lineups. So she was just -- The SS men made fun of her.

Q Did any of the women try to help her?

A We all try to help her.

Q How did you try? What was--

A We tried to -- We says, "Okay, everything be all right." We hold on -- And there was two aunt--one aunt and one cousin with her, and they all tried till they just couldn't, you know. She just wandered out in everything, because she was -- She lost her mind, poor little young girl. And one day she just couldn't make it. She wandered away and an SS shoot her. And we marched on. It's--

(Side Two of Tape)

A You know I live with a lot because so many things happen between. But, you know. And as we kept on, you know, marching, it was very cold and people's noses get froze, their fingers. Matter of fact, these two sisters whom I'm talking about, their fingers -- She came back, die Gabi. Gabi was her name and the other one was Alice. And Gabi, the fingers -- But I think she lives in Israel.

Q Her fingers were frozen?

A Frozen on up to here and I heard that she don't have

fingers, just up to here now.

Q She got gangrene and it was amputated?

A Amputated, yes, because it was frozen. Then we and my friends -- My sister and we was marching, you know. So once we went to a farmer who give us -- They put us under the--on the--what they call it--attic where they keep the hay. And they -- All of us was up there and they take away the ladder that we shouldn't go. But they needed some girls to give out the potatoes, so we went down to help to give out the potatoes. The farmer said, he says, you know, "Where are you going?" I says, "We don't know." He said, "You know, they're going to kill you." I says, "We're marching." He said, "It's almost end of the war." I says, "What should you do?" He says, "You're best if you're hiding. Go hide." I say, "Where we can hide? It's nowhere." So me and -- My sister, me and another girl, we run into the forest in the night.

Q How did you escape?

A We just slide down. We just slide down from the--from the--

Q Loft?

A From the loft. Yeah, we find a stick. We find a stick and we put him down and we played with our life. So it was dark, it was cold. But we see woods there, so we went to the woods and we stayed and we hide there in the branch. The people went, marched in the morning. They

line up and they went, marched further. And then we come back to the farmer and he don't let us in. He says, "No, you're trouble. I can't." He said, "You know, they was counting the people. They missed you." But I said, "No trouble?" He said, "No trouble." I says they left because it's chaos already. You know, it wasn't--

Q It was-- ?

A It was like a chaos already. It wasn't, you know--

Q What is -- I don't understand that word.

A Chaos.

Q Oh, chaos. I'm sorry.

A Yeah.

Q Why did you come back?

A Where?

Q You escaped at night but you came back? Why did you come back?

A Because we don't know where to go, you see. We was hungry.

Q I see.

A And we was in the striped jacket. We was afraid because, you know, it still--they would ask questions. So we asked the farmer what should we do. He says, "You can go nowhere in this outfit." So he give us some old clothes, some kerchiefs. But he said, "You must to leave here because you can't stay here." He said, "If they find you here, I'm in trouble." So they give us something to eat and we start to go and we don't know where --

This was in Poland. And as we was marching, you know, they asked -- We always knocked on door and said-- for food, you know. In the daytime we was in the forest and in the nighttime was was marching, going backwards, you know, to Poland, because they took us to Germany. So people said, "Where are you going?" I said--and says, "What are you doing here?" We said that we want to go home. We, you know, was working and we want to go home and we don't have no money or nothing. So they know what we are, the peoples, so we thought that, you know they going to help us. We going to be good protected, you know, because they see is end of the war and when they knock on the Polish peoples' door. So some of it help, some of it wouldn't open the door.

Q Did you look Jewish?

A No, we just grew back the hair.

Q Oh, so you didn't have much hair?

A Not much hair, and we wear kerchiefs. And you know, you was young and you was, you know--

Q But they knew you were Jewish?

A They had an idea, yes.

Q Did they ask you?

A They don't ask us. Just they ask where I'm--where we going, you know. So we was wandering, wandering. And then all of a sudden, we was around Poland and we heard already that the front is very close because in the night

we see the sky light up. I see on the ground a lot of soldiers, and a lot of Germans was evacuating from Poland. The wagons was on the way, you know. They throw a bomb and they all just blew up. And we don't know, you know, what to do, so we went into a farmer and we asked if we can work there. So we stayed in this farmer and work, my sister and my girlfriend each on one of the big farms there, and work there. And they was ready already because it happened to be the front there, the fight there, you know. And you see actually. In one of the farms was the staff, the German staff. So we was very afraid. But we said that we are--

Q One of the farmers was a German--?

A No, they were Polish farmers. But the German farmers left already. The Germans left already, you know. And this was a lot of Germans left Poland this time and they just left everything.

Q So there was German stuff on the farms?

A Yes. But we was afraid--

Q Like clothes? Furniture?

A No, the staff. The German staff, like the soldiers. The hospitals and things they build, they put on the, you know, on the farms what they was left, you know. The Germans left the farms. They occupied, the German, you know. The families--

Q The Germans occupied the farms.

A The families who was living, you know, they left the farms and the German Army was making there like a staff. So we was afraid, not to go in this farm. We went to the Polish farms, you know. And they took us and we said we'd do anything. Help us. Just take us in. So they take us in and we help with the household chores and everything. And then we were freed one day.

Q Tell me about the liberation day.

A The liberation day was -- They build a bunker and they was in the bunker, the whole family in the night. Daytime they was in the house; in the night we all go down with the family to the bunker.

Q The three of you?

A No. My -- I was in this farm. My sister was in another farm closeby, because, you know, they don't want to hire, you know; they don't want to keep so many. Matter of fact, during the night the baby needed -- They have a little baby. Said, "Olga, you can milk a cow?" I said, "Sure." So they send me milk the cow to bring--not much, bring a little milk for the baby. And the soldiers, the German soldiers walking and everything. All of a sudden I see the whole sky light up. The bomb fall down. The German soldiers wasn't there anymore, you know. And I walked through it. I went back in the bunker and I said to the farmer's wife, "You know what's happening outside?" So and there was a railroad closeby and they would bomb

the railroad. So anyway we was there--

Q I must ask you: How did you know how to milk? Did you just--

A I just did it. You know--you know, I don't know a lot of things how I did, how I managed. But, you know, I never -- I saw how they milked the cow and I come from a small town. But everything--the cow was full with milk because we didn't have a chance to milk, so you know. They give me a little pail and I just -- I didn't sit down, I just put it down and I milked because, you know, so much noise, so much gunshot and things. So anyway, I bring in the milk and we was there about-- every night about a couple a days we went back in the farm. Daytime we was in the house; nighttime we stay in the bunker. And one night, you know, we peeked out and all of a sudden very quiet. And a couple minutes later the Russian soldiers, "Davai, davai. Everybody out from the bunker." So we come out with the hands up. He said, the Russian -- We understand Russian, you know, the Czechs. And they said, "You live here?" He says, "No, we don't. We just get caught in here." He says, "What you are?" I said, "Jewish." "Jewish?" "Yes." He says, "Okay, stay here." So they gather us and put us in a place, a safe place, a gathering Lager, a gathering place. The Russian soldiers went through, went through the bodies. They took us to a gathering place and they feed us.

Q What was your health like at this point? Did you get enough -- Did you get to eat on the farm? Did they feed you?

A On the farm we had, yes.

Q So you were a little bit stronger? You had fresh milk.

A Stronger. We had very good food, fresh milk. Eating, you know, farmers what a lot of food they have. But you see that couple days this time wasn't so bad. And we couldn't eat anymore. Our stomach wasn't ready for the food. We get--

Q So you got sick when you started working on the farm?

A Working on the farm. You know, you can't eat anymore, because we wasn't used to milk, you know.

Q So you had diarrhea?

A Diarrhea. So we went to this gathering Lager and then slowly we start our way back.

Q You were now in Poland?

A Poland, yes.

Q And you wanted to go back to Czechoslovakia?

A Czechoslovakia. So, you know, we wondered how it would be. We went through a lot here and there and then--

Q Were you in a DP camp?

A What?

Q Were you in a displaced persons camp?

A No, no. We went always on our own. Matter of fact, we went on coal trains, we coming back, you know. Whenever

we entered the station (unintelligible) . And then we went to Humenné. That was a gathering Lager. We went down already. They go down, go down for the train. We went up again on the train, you know. And we went to Humenné.

Q That was in Czechoslovakia?

A Czechoslovakia. That town we went. And there was already the Red Cross. And they bring the list. And then I find out our brother is alive.

Q And tell me about your reunion with your brother.

A Well, you know, we was there a lot of people from all over. It was there even -- People from all over. I didn't met anybody from my town, but the Red Cross kept on coming with lists. And, you know, one day they come with with a list and I look at it and there is my brother's name. So me and my sister was happy to see it. And, you know, right away how you can lose touch. And--but they don't know where he is, because we give the name where he is, but he wasn't, you know--he was--

Q He'd moved on?

A Moved on, yes. So we try to go back to Czechoslovakia. We went back and we met actually -- We know already that--where he--he was in Czechoslovakia, but we went home to our town and then we come back and meet him there and it was just amazing. You know, like you come back from the dead. I don't--I don't have to tell you.

Q Were you with your sister still and your girlfriend?

A No. My girlfriend, we divided -- When -- After when we went to the farm, you know, I don't know. We was-- because we all stay in a different farm. When we went look for him, she left before us. That was very bad because we run away together; you know, I mean, we hide together.

Q Escaped.

A Escaped, yeah, together.

Q But she went--

A You know, like we was on three farms. I was on one farm, my sister and she was on other farms.

Q And did you see her after the war?

A No. No, I never find her. Faigi was her name. Very sweet girl, very nice. I don't know.

Q Did you look for her?

A I asked for her. I asked for her in Humenné where we were in the gathering Lager. But I heard she's alive. She is alive.

Q Today?

A Yes. Not today. During the war I heard that she survived. She was younger even than I. She was a couple years younger. Very, very hard working. And then--

Q Tell me -- I want to know about how you came to America, but before you tell me that, I want to ask you about the SS men and the Jewish women. Did you ever see a woman being raped or any sexual abuses of prisoners?

A I didn't. No, I didn't see. I didn't.

Q Did you hear stories?

A No. I--I heard a woman who worked--they take her to clean the SS men's rooms. And she was a very nice woman. But no, they don't bother. They just -- You know, how we look, we don't even look -- I hear some places, but not in mine.

Q Were you afraid of being raped?

A Not -- We was afraid--

Q Afraid of everything?

A We was afraid always on everything. We always was afraid. It was a usual thing if they come in and said, "Line up," because right away the lineup would go to the gas chamber or they kill you or take you somewhere. We always was afraid. Every little change was, you know, scary.

Q Did you want to stay in Czechoslovakia or did you -- You wanted to leave?

A Well, we went back home and our house -- I come from a small town. And my aunt actually come back with her children. And she live in her house and she was the first one come back. So all the kids who come back, you know -- Because we come back and we don't have nobody. So we all gather in her house. She had quite a big house.

Q Your aunt was in her fifties?

A Yes. She was -- Yeah, I think about--yeah, in fifties.

Q Was she in Auschwitz?

A Auschwitz, yeah. And the son -- She was with the daughter, but she reunited with the son later. The son come back, too. And we all was there, you know. We had our own home, but they give the house for gentile people and they don't let us into our house. So nothing to stay there, nothing. So my brother was in Czechoslovakia. We went to my brother and stay with my brother until I get married.

Q You were married in Czechoslovakia?

A In Czechoslovakia, yeah. And then we had a chance, you know. He was registered in the Czech quota.

Q He was registered on-- ?

A Czech quota.

Q So he came here?

A Yeah.

Q Why didn't you -- Did you want to go to Israel?

A We was in Israel. I was in Israel a year before I came here.

Q So you emigrated from Czechoslovakia to Israel?

A Yeah, to Israel and from Israel to here.

Q And why did you leave Israel?

A Well, I tell you, I hear from my brother. We want to be together. He wouldn't come there and then he said -- You know, first we said I'm going to try. I leave my husband there, but my husband don't want be separated and we all come and we all stayed here.

Q And you moved to-- ?

A To Brooklyn.

Q To Brooklyn. Is that where you live now?

A No, I live in Philadelphia--

Q That's right, that's right.

A --with my daughter. Yeah, I live there.

Q You live -- You and your daughter live together?

A No, no, in separate apartments. I have my own apartment.

Q Are you separated now from your husband?

A No, he died six years ago. Actually that's why I moved.

Q Pardon?

A That's why I moved here, because my kids don't want I should stay alone so I should be closer. So we stayed here--moved here.

Q Tell me about -- How many children do you have?

A Two.

Q Two. Did your children begin to ask you--

A Oh, yes.

Q --questions?

A Oh, yes.

Q How old were they when they started asking?

A Well, when they was young they wasn't interested. No, they was hearing about the Holocaust and thinking here is bad, too, you know. They--my children always feel sorry for us, you know, always. And they always feel sorry what we went through and they always want to please

us. And whenever, you know, something happens, if they, you know, rebel in something, they say, "Oh, I'm sorry, mommy, I know we don't want to do it." I says, "Don't feel so guilty, I mean, it's not your fault. You know, it happened to us." But somehow I sense that my children feel all these years sorry for us.

Q But your husband was a survivor also?

A Yes. But my husband was in the Czech Army. He was an officer in the army. He was actually with my brother together. He fall in-- he was like a working Lager, working--you know. How they call it. Like the Jewish people, Jewish boys, they don't take to army, they take to working Lager. And then they -- You know this about -- You don't know the Jewish people, they don't take to the army.

Q Oh, they don't take -- Was he a yeshiva boy?

A No, no, no. No, I mean, the Jewish youngsters, the boys, they don't take to the army when this happened, you know. But they take as working--

Q Oh, they did not take them into the army. I see. I'm sorry.

A You know, my English is--

Q No, your English is fine.

A No, no, no.

Q So they took him to a work camp?

A Work camp, right. And then they fall in prison for Russia and there they form a Czechoslovakian army. You probably heard for the Swoboda, General Swoboda?

Q Yes.

A Yes, so they formed this army. And my husband and my brother was together in the army.

Q Is that how you met your husband?

A Yes, they come back and my--you know, all the youngsters.

Q So your children ask questions?

A They ask questions and they want to know--

Q What did you tell them?

A Well, I tell you the same thing, you know. And, you know, it's a lot of details because all those Lagers was starved. The SS -- Matter of fact, you know, was instant -- You know, I don't tell you. You was very hungry. And as we was marching to the field, we passed a sugarcane field, and we was five-hundred girls and was hungry, so you know, we run into the sugarcane and we--because we eat the straw. And the SS men comes and takes the gun, because we did this every morning, you know. So the SS man one morning take the gun and just shoot like this--

Q Into the--

A In the women, you know, who was -- And I don't see my sister; my sister don't see me. Quite a few of them, you know, got shoot down and you look--I looked between the red, you know, in front of me, how they lyed. And

before they was talking to them and they was lying on the field there between the sugarcane. Oh. And many instances we was in a farm and the people start to run all over, you know, for food also. All of a sudden, the SS man get crazy and shoot just the gun, just like this, the same thing, you know. So I scream and I look. I don't find my sister. I look up and down and she don't find me, you know. Luckily -- It was luck, not that you was brave; there was nothing else we could do. Luckily, we both survived. I know that time we had those wooden shoes, you couldn't walk because they're so sick without food. I said I can't make it, my sister was pulling me on her shoulder. What do you think, you know; that happened. It's just unbelievable, you know, unbelievable that, you know, that--that -- We was in Auschwitz just a couple of days. You can get crazy. Them smell in there and the music was going, the soft music, you know. He played always the Bach. The extermination go on--

Q Mm?

A You know, the extermination goes on and the music was playing softly. And, you know, you see this bunch of shoes there and the bunch of hair and it's a bunch of clothes there, like mountains, you know, in front of you. And those peoples, walking--they, they--with the skirt, you know. It's like it wasn't really. Not even now, I-- I--I--I don't know if was the whole thing real or a

dream.

Q What kinds of things trigger memories for you? Does something happen to you when you hear Bach? Does that frighten you?

A Yes. Yes, this music, you know. And when I hear, you know, in the night, middle in the night, I just get up and says, "Please not my children, just not my children." I'm scared. I'm scared.

Q You wake up crying in the middle of the night?

A I'm frightened in the middle of the night: not my children; just don't take my children. You know, because you see youngsters, you know, how they -- It was just impossible. I don't--I can't believe it. Like when we was in Poland and when we was in the barrack and just an oberschöffe get angry just for no reason and was so cold and send us out in the snow. And we stayed for a whole night. In the morning we had to go to work. And for no reason. We stay in Appell in the snow. Just our--happened to be our barrack. They did things that -- And you know, the people say now that don't happen and I wouldn't believe it either. I wouldn't believe it if somebody tell me that what happened. I just wouldn't believe it that this can happen.

Q How do you feel when you hear people say that the Jews went to the gas chambers like sheep to the slaughter?

A You know, I just was talking about it, but what can you do? They take away the man, they took away--they left the woman with the children. What else can you? No gun, no nothing. And you know, you can't believe it, those SS men. They surround your house like -- We had a corner house, and the tank was lined up all of a sudden around your house. You don't know what's doing, what words going to happen or what. Just like from the blue sky, you don't know. You can't do nothing, you can't, because you can't do nothing with a tank and the SS man with the dogs. And you don't know what, you are afraid they look at you. But they don't even. They come in, they right away pack, and you know, everything was just like--just like a dream, like -- Even when they took us the ghetto, you know. Then when they line up us on the wagon and put us on the cattle wagon and the people whom you was friends, the Christians, they don't even shed a tear, you know. And you just walk on the street what you used to, ride a bicycle; I used to ride with people, talk to people.

Q And how do you feel about the Christians who didn't help you, who didn't shed a tear?

A Well, I tell you, I feel very bad. But even who would to do something, they couldn't, they couldn't. They couldn't. I am not sure they wanted, but they couldn't. They was so afraid. Everything was so rigid. I mean, you know, I grow up and the boys and the girls together went

to school, you know. And some of it was bad. Some of it was already inflicted with Hitlerism, but some of it was nice. But they couldn't do nothing. Nobody could. Everything was -- You know how it is. But--

Q So you're saying the gentiles' hands were tied? Is that--

A Not really. I don't say that, because, you know -- But I mean, everything comes so sudden, that I don't know anybody can do anything. I don't -- If, you know, the whole thing was that we thought, okay, it can't happen to us, what happened, the fall in Czechoslovakia. It's a democratic country; can't happen because .. (unintelligible) . You don't know what kind of people they were. When you find out, it was already too late. It was already all -- You know, when you find out that you lost your parents, you know -- I always come back -- You come back with this feeling that you find them, you know; it's a miracle. And I went back to my house and my mother used to go in the night to the neighbor, I heard the squeak of the door. When I heard the squeak of the door, I could see the front of my mother when I opened the door first. The whole thing. I can't cry no more. I cry, I cried just--just, you know, all of a sudden dawn on me and I cry days. And then I can't cry no more, you know. That's--that's -- And like, you know, affected me the whole thing now because we have our Jahrzeit now after the parents on the 15th in the Holocaust and things

are taking very down and it's affected me very much.

Yeah, I think--I think that's all.

Q I think that's all the tape. It's just ending.

A Oh, yeah?

(End of tape.)