

Eva Lachter interview transcript

Tape #1

Eva Lachter. I'm from Poland.

This was in Budzyn. [Though she says "Budzyn," she meant to say "Belzyce," as she does say correctly in the next paragraph. Budzyn was the labor camp she was taken to after the Belzyce ghetto was liquidated.] One day in 1943, arrived from Lublin Obershaffuer Feix.

They arrived from Lublin -- I'm near Lublin -- and by us they made a ghetto. Everybody they cleaned up and by us they made a ghetto. This ghetto was the last ghetto to make everything "Judenrein". Why? Because they always came to us for food, all kinds of things, diamonds, boots, furs, etc. Whatever they needed they came to us, and this save us another few months. All people from around Belzyce, let's say Yanov, Krashnik, Hodel, all the little cities around us, they accumulated by us.

One day, about 2 o'clock, midnight they accumulated us to the Shul. They watch us, the *volksdeutch* and the S.S. All night we heard shooting. Let's say about 2 o'clock at night. Everybody was afraid. We asked, "What happened?"

They say "Don't worry, don't worry. Partisans came; we had a fight with Partisans. And we saved a few people. We will watch you."

Around 6-7 o'clock in the morning, they start to wake everybody. Anyway, we went up around 5 to 6 o'clock to go to work. By 7 o'clock went out on an *appel*, to stand out outside. They counted us. All kind of thing. This was May 8th. They wake us up, and we went out. We see plenty SS and Ukrainians circling the whole ghetto and say "Everything out!" And except this, always by us were the *volksdeutch*.

They caught . . . when someone has a little baby, they don't have enough food to give, they sneak out to buy a little milk on the black market. And these small kids . . . the mothers they have to go to work, and the kids, they took one room, put 2 women to watch all the kids. Maybe 15-20 kids, maybe more . . . kids from 2 months to 5 months to a year. The mother has to go to work. And one time my cousin went out to bring food for the child, and an SS man . . . not an SS man, a *volksdeutch*, he like an SS man, grab her and say "*Yudah*, What are you doing here?" and he catch her and he brought it right away to Mendzvitza, Mendelvitza . . .this was where all the *volksdeutch* were living . . . and they shoot her.

Meanwhile, by this time they catch me - they took me to work. They took us to work, let's say for 4, 2 months, 6 weeks, to clean up all cities that was bombed. And they catch me. I have to drag, in old houses, and everything. I been there for about 2-3 months. A little place. Later they bring us back to our ghetto, in Belzyce, I saw she's on wagon and two S.S. with her. I say "What

happened'? She couldn't answer me. When I come home I find out what happen. When I come, the rest of the people told me. They catch her.

All right. And meanwhile, the baby was between the kids. And I know it. After work I went in, and picked up this child. It was burned, from urine. Two women, what could they do with a whole room kids, small babies, they can't help. So every night, after work, I went in, and clean up little baby I call him "Menashala, Menashala", that's his name. He looked with his eyes. He know me already. And I pick him up, and I try to clean him. You know I don't know this time about kids, but still, I feel sorry for the babies. And that's all.

And this happened. Till one time, what I started to talk to you. There was a Obershaffuer Feix. He was the leader who came to finish us. And everyone went out, men and women onto the *Shul* lot; there was a big, big lot and he took all men, pushed them in the *Shul*. Nobody expected it. Nobody had something. But he was afraid that the men see what they do with the women will be something trouble, and he put around to watch the men and started to make a selection. Later he took 10 men, he picked up [*spoke an aside about Chaim Fried, a family friend*] he took out 10 men to give shovels to dig holes.

He started to select people—he grabbed this, this, this.

And by this time I already lost all my family. Just I have been one survivor of my own. We were 7 kids at home.

[INTERVIEWER] How old were you?

This time I was 18-19 years, between 18-19. After me there were another 4 kids. I was the third one. There was an older sister, a brother, and I was the third one, then 2 sisters, a brother and a little sister.

They start to grab everytime. "*Juden*, everybody out, out!" There was a room for sick people. They took out the sick people in bed and they shoot them . . . on the bed. Bring out on the lot and shoot them. We saw what was going on. Later they told us "Everything take off!" Like I was just born. You can imagine. We was very low this time our moral. Take off every clothing and throw away. Later he started to select. "Right, left, right, right, left, right, left."

I'm so nervous; I can't concentrate on what I say.

And I had just a cousin. We was holding by the hand. She was the only cousin that I had only, and she - you know, I'm by myself. She was older than about 2 years from me and she said to me "Chavah". Chava they call me in Jewish. "Chavah, you're younger from me. Maybe you'll be" - and she had a few *Zloytes* [Polish currency] in her hand. When she saw . . . not too much . . . ready to shoot, she said "Look, maybe you survive, take the money and give somebody, maybe you can buy your life from some soldier." She tried, but they don't want it, they grab her, and

she put - throw the money in my hand. I could do nothing. No screams, nothing. You say something, right away, on the place, they shoot you.

He was shooting so much. He started by 7 o'clock till 11 o'clock in the morning.

It was May. A beautiful day. Was a tree standing. And I saw a bird standing on this tree.

And later they grabbed me. And the mass grave was so full with people. Dead, young, old, all kind people. And I didn't have a place. Before, when he shoot the people, he shoot them anyplace. They panic, they screaming they say . . . A mother say to her son: "Ooh, I have a piece of chocolate in my pocket. Give me. I feel terrible. I don't feel good." She was half dead and he started to cry. "Take a look, take a look what I have to have to my mother, take a look." He started to cry, we both cry, I say "We all dead, don't . . . it's nothing to do, you see what's going on here." Later they kill him, I never saw him no more.

When they grab me, my body was full of blood from other people, splashing the blood and the people was [says in Yiddish "lifting themselves up"]. Their bodies was moving place to place - half dead, half dead. He saw this, and he took out a bottle of schnapps from his . . . Feixx himself. And washed his hand, washed his face. Later he put back. I say "*Where ist zech lugin?*" ("Where should I lay down?")

Later he told "Lay down, on the knees, and open your mouth!" And started to shoot in the mouth. He saw people ready. He didn't have idea why they were crawling, half dead - this

[TRANSLATOR] "He was shooting them in different places so they weren't dying immediately.

They weren't dying right away.

This time I asked him. I did have a place to lay down already? It was full. Thousands. It was 500 women only. Except this, men, kids, young boys—he figured they can't work, young kids. Lovely kids, believe me.

He say "*Lump*, piece rag, stand up!" I figured . . . "How old you are?" I said "Eighteen".

He say "You eighteen? You still strong to work. You will do something good for Germany."

I heard this . . . Oy! God mine. Turn over everything inside.

And he said "Go away!" And I went back. And here was Ukranians. And here was Ukrainian soldiers, they started to whip me to go back. I'm so nervous I forget the language. They started to whip me this way, in the back, and this way, And I become like a X—red. And I run back. I saw they kill me and I come back, he [Feix] say "*Lump*, what you doing here? *Lump*, piece rag, what you doing here?" He recognized me. I say "The soldiers they don't let me go through" He started screaming "Otto and Klavi!"

I don't remember what I eat before, believe me. When I like to say something, I know I'm not so bad in English, but I get nervous. I can't bring out, but my memory get mixed up. And this I can never forget: Otto and Klavi. *Lozen sie duch!* That they should let me through. And I went through back. I been the first girl they pick. Why? He remind himself, this was in Budzyn, and this is when he went to a ghetto, he cleaned up everything

INTERVIEWER: You mean, he cleaned up all the people?

Yeah, he killed them.

And this time the commandant -- was a commandant for men in Budzyn, where he took me, and for woman. He took me this place and she [the commandant of the women] know when he go some place, he clean up. She said [to herself], "Let me save a few kids" He asked her "Regina, Regina, you need some workers?" She don't know what to say. "Yes, Oberscharfuhrer." Maybe she saluted him. "I can use another 20 girls." And this was mine luck, what she told. He was so drunk, and there was not too much people already, not too much women from us, and maybe he reminded himself what she told him - he say "Go back!"

And he likes to take me to work. In fact, I was working like a horse. And I went back. I figured, "God, mine. What happened? Why he chose me! After this, after what I saw? Was for me more painful. I figured he give me a special death. No. Later I see in a few minutes another girl and another girl, till 20 girls. And one girl, she know me very well, she started crying "Chavah, please save me! Take me to you" and we been naked, and she too, and I say to her "Give me something to cover up." There was a big mound of clothes and shoes, and everything, and she throw me a skirt. You can fit 10 people to roll around in. I had been so skinny this time, like a stick. And she throw me and I roll myself around and I hold it this way. She liked to crawl to me. Boom, they kill her right away on that place. Alright, I stay there and there is nothing I can do, just cry. I lost my mind this time, that's all. Later when I saw another, another, and another come, till he finished the rest, and he started to take us . . .

There was one truck. On this truck he took . . . something food. I don't know what, I don't know nothing. And later he took us to Budzyn, near Krashnik. He took us over there.

And meanwhile, he put us on the wagon. I was standing. I didn't know what was going on with me. I lost my mind altogether. He came to me again: "Piece *Lump*, what's the matter?" He put the pistol near my head. "You like I should shoot you?" I didn't answer him.

Maybe he realized what was going on with me. I had long hair. He took me by my hair and dragged me on the wagon. And still I didn't know what was going on with me. Till someone later give me a little water; they still had something with them, because they figure we go to work. You know, what you have at home—you take a piece of bread, a piece this, . . . and that's all.

Later when they come again to Budzyn. . . yeah, and on the way was three sisters. He kill the mother and two sisters. And one sister saw her father alive between the men when we were traveling; on the way . . . when he finished already the whole ghetto, he brought us to Budzyn from Belzyce.

On the way he stopped to give the horses food and water. Not us. Not the people. And the girl look around. She was sitting on the wagon. She run down. She saw her father.

He [Feixx] saw this. "Piece *Lump*, where you running?"

The father say, "This is my daughter," and she say, "This is my father."

"*Lump*, go to your place!"

When we arrived at the place, he made again a selection. He recognized . . . he was such a shrewd guy. Unbelievable.

He picked her [the girls who had run to her father on the trip to Budzyn]. "Come here!"

He looked at me again. He looked at everyone, one by one.

I been filthy . . . blood . . . my legs . . . and everything. Not clothes, not nothing. No shoes, nothing. He looked

Later he pick up again ten people he don't like how they were looking. From the whole selection that he did, he took a few men too to work, and the twenty women that he picked with us . . . twenty girls.

And later he picked up [unclear], and took ten soldiers, and he went into the barracks, and we heard right away "tut, tut, tut, tut, tut [sound of rifle fire]. That's all. Finish.

And we . . . he told us to go into the barrack, to clean up a little bit, and the next day they took us to work.

They took us to work . . . I don't have shoes . . . I don't have nothing. I was on the "*pritch*" [the bed in the barracks] and I couldn't go out I didn't have shoes . . . nothing.

In the daytime after they threw out the people to work . . . everybody know we have to go out at 5:00 o'clock, 6:00 o'clock . . . when they wish.

INTERVIEWER: "What kind of work did they want you do?"

Any work. Dirty, filthy work. They took us . . . to clean . . . all kinds of work . . . to *shlep*, . . . they give us to clean by the S.S., by they been over there. To dressing. . . And that's all.

Ve halt ech? [Where am I holding?] I lost my mind. Believe me. When I start to talk about this, is after me.

When he took us to work, and everybody went out and I been still in barrack. Regina [the commandant of the women] come in and say “What you doing here?” and I say to her “Give me anything, slippers, anything. I can’t go to work. I can’t stand in the morning about three hours until they count us, and everything.” I don’t have clothes. I don’t have a blouse. I don’t have nothing. Just the piece of rag that she throw me.

And she say “Oy, don’t bother me. I don’t have time.”

When she told me this, I started to cry. What should I do? Should I run out, . . . they figure I’m altogether crazy already. So I was sitting, and I figure whatever will happen, will happen. They come later, the S.S., to check the barracks and if somebody is there, they shoot. And I figure, the hell, anyway I can’t go on no more with my life. I give up.

Later the commandant from the men—there was a commandant from the men, and a woman over the women—and he say—he was a very nice man—and he say, “What you doing here?”

I say, “I don’t have what to put on. I can’t go out naked.”

He say, “Why didn’t you tell Regina?”

I say, “I told her, and she doesn’t want to listen to me.”

He say, “Come with me.” He took the key from the magazine, from the clothes. This was our clothes . . . from the people. And other clothes. Shoes and other

He say, “Come.” He took me by his hand and took me to the magazine. I fit myself a dress, and some underwear . . . what I could. And shoes.

And he say, “Alright. Now you can still work,” and he gave me work inside, and say tomorrow you will go to work, and I say, “They left already.” He can’t send me out by myself. They took us out to make roads, all kinds of things, all kinds of junk. This was work. What was not necessary, believe me.

[INTERVIEWER: “So women had to work on roads, too?”

Yeah. Women, men. No different. When not, by the building to clean when they finished out the floors, the windows, this, that. Just at the beginning—when I arrived.

Later they made a *warshfad*, a workroom, a sewing place. For seamstresses.

You know for who? For the soldiers. Collars, piping. On their uniforms.

They say “Who is a tailor?” I say, “I.” I figured better to be a tailor than to go out and work in the stones and everything. All right, I “*heib*” [raise] my hand. He say to me, “Come!”

He took a few girls and opened a place for us. I was fixing the piping on the collars. My fingers was breaking. I was good at this, just it was heavy work. Alright.

This was privilege I don’t have to go out. All shoemakers, dressmakers, they give a special block. In ghetto! Just we have special . . . the food the same . . . everything the same. Just we [didn’t] have to go with everybody too much.

We been all day long. Just after work we been with the people.

And I was dressmaker. I did this, I did this . . . all kind of work by the machine. I don’t know how I did it. I did it. I don’t know how. And he likes this work, everything. Later he say, “This is not enough!”

Later, the S.S. ladies, they have kids, they have a family life over there. And they figure, “Why should I work? Let’s take maids, it’s cheap maids.”

And a lady say . . . she had four kids, and he was a builder, they build houses . . . everything. He was the leader from the barracks, what they build for the soldiers, and everything. And he had a privilege, he have a maid for nothing. He say, “My wife can use a dressmaker. I have four kids.”

They send me to her. This was better for me. I have a little bread to eat. In the morning I have to clean the house, I have to wash “*vesh*” [clothing] with the hand, on a board, you know. I was so . . . I don’t know how. In the house [In the home she grew up in] I didn’t do this. We took somebody to wash the “*vesh*” [clothing] for us.

I did cleaning, washing, everything. Like it was my house. This was in the morning. And after this . . . 2:00 o’clock they have to have their dinner. I have to cook for them. I didn’t know how to cook a little water at home. Everything my sister and my mother did. And . . . when you have to do it, you do it.

And they told me to kill chicken. And to this I say “One thing,” I took my strength and say, “I’m sorry, I can’t kill.”

I should go to the cellar, grab chicken, and kill, and clean up, and everything, and make dinner for 2:00 o’clock. In Europe they was eating at 2:00 o’clock dinner.

I say, “This I can’t do it. Everything . . . You can kill me even. I can’t kill a chicken.”

When he heard this . . . and the wife. You know, it’s not nice. Maybe if the wife was not at home he kill me.

He say, “Alright. Eva, don’t do it this. I will kill.”

He went himself. He grabbed two chicken. He kill. Later I have to pull out the feathers, everything, to clean up, and I make dinner at 2:00 o'clock. Like a clock, by the minute. I cooked dinner, I cooked this . . . After dinner I have to wash the dishes. I washed the kitchen floor.

I don't know where I took my strength this time.

After this I been finished. We went home about 7:00 o'clock, after work. The few hours I started to sew by her. She had a sewing machine. I don't know where she took it. On my luck, she had a sewing machine.

And I have to sew for the kids. Four kids she have. Till night time.

One thing that was good for me, I went home . . . she give me the opportunity to take a shower. And this was a big, big deal over there. When not

And I took a shower. I wash my dress. I put on the sun. She had an old housedress, she told me I could put on meanwhile. One dress I only had. I put out the dress to dry in the sun fast, and I went home. And that's all. Everyday so, a year. Less than a year.

And meanwhile, this Feix . . . once . . . he likes to have fun.

He say, "Let's make a theatre!" He call the whole place. And he sit. You have to sing, you have to do this, and we have to perform. When you don't know, you don't know!

Meanwhile, between the performance, somebody come in . . . he was a summer and a winter with us. . . a year. No . . . this was in May He was with us until September or October, this guy.

And, yeah, every morning, he never went to eat breakfast until he don't sit on his horse . . . a machine gun. He was a light blonde. He went out . . . around. He went to the kitchen place looking, and when he found somebody picking peels from potato, people, he right away say "Why you eat this *shmutz*, this garbage?" He don't give food. He kill them. "I don't want you should eat garbage." You should see what kind of soup we had . . .

[TAPE ENDS]

Tape #2

My children would ask me "Why you don't we have a grandma? Why don't you have sisters? Why don't we have an uncle? You didn't have sisters? You didn't have brothers?"

I say, "Yes. Yes, I had once."

But they were still young. I don't talk to them about this.

Later when they become little older, twelve, fifteen years . . . still I didn't talk too much about this. But they went to the library. Now he [referring to her son who was at the interview] know

like I, even better than me. Why? I don't remember exactly the dates and every thing. He remembers better than me now. He reads, he knows everything. And he make me to come here. I didn't want to come here. I know it's a lost case. I can help nothing.

[INTERVIEWER] Why didn't you want to come?

Why? You see why! My hearts is broken in thousand pieces. When you break a mirror you see splinters, splinters . . . this way is my heart. When I start it . . . [the interviewee breaks down and begins to cry. The tape is turned off.]

[The tape begins again]

Two weeks later they catch the father of the baby, the husband of my cousin and they did the same thing to him. They catch him outside the ghetto and they shoot him. The same thing they did to his wife . . . The orphan was by himself, so I took a little care of him when I come back from work. The only thing . . . once a day I wipe and clean the child.

But later this was not enough for the kids, when they cleaned us up, when they finish with us, they went in and took axe and kill the kids.

He [S.S. Lagerkommandant Reinhold Feix] say it is a shame to . . . we can use the bullet for the soldier on the front to kill other people, not the kids. For this garbage you can take an axe and cut off the head. And this was the end of the whole nursery of kids.

Who can believe this? I tell you the truth. When I don't see this with my own eyes everything, and even I cannot believe this. Sometimes I ask myself "Is this true? Is this true? Could be such a think in this world?" If my mother come back now alive from the grave, even she can't believe me.

I don't blame nobody. Some people say this is not true. It's unbelievable such a thing.

[INTERVIEWER] How do you feel the people say it's not true, that it couldn't have happened?

I don't blame them! It's really . . .such things should happen? Tell me. Is it possible? And still, it is true!

I saw it with my own eyes. They show pictures, this, this. But I saw it with my own eyes.

Look, I told my son, now he's older, he's more understanding. He knows, reads everything, he hears. And I say that whatever they show is a drop in a bucket. Not a bucket, but a whole ocean. I don't blame the people that they say this. It's unbelievable. I went through everything and I say "How they did this to us? How did we survive this?"

After this they took us to Majdanek. You heard about Majdanek? Over there started a new thing. Before we got to Majdanek they took out the people and shoot.

Why I feel so miserable in Majdanek? They grabbed my father to Majdanek. He was living there three weeks. He was a healthy man, tall, strong, nice. And after three weeks he was finished. He lost his morale, his dignity.

[INTERVIEWER] Were you together there?

No, I still then lived in the ghetto. And after three weeks I heard he is no longer with us.

Whatever you did was not good. If you were working it was no good, They hit. They kill. Work, not work. If you turned your head at work. They give you over your head. It was no good.

When I heard this I still had a hope that maybe my older brother, who was two years older than me, was still alive. Tall, handsome. He was a strong guy. All my family was strong. I was the smallest. I was shorty. I was figuring, maybe, maybe, maybe. No. I knew at this time, when I went away I was by myself . . . and that's all.

There is plenty to tell. When he finished us, he took the older people. I have a grandmother, 72 years old. It was men separate, women separate, kids separate. And when the women saw . . . he started to choose. . . my grandma had me . . . she started to cry, and everybody. He started shooting into the group and he killed everybody. Not only my grandma . . . you know how a woman, a grandma, see how they kill the kids . . . the sons, this and this, and they killed everyone ... all the people.

"This scheisse (shit), garbage, I don't need," he said. He killed them.

Believe me, what my eyes saw . . . I . . . I wonder I am walking around on this earth. That's why it's no good for me to talk. My husband ask me many times why I don't make a tape. He made a tape. He has a stronger character than me in this point. I'm very . . . I don't sleep at nighttime. I always have the picture roll in front of my eyes. The groups, . . . everything! I see my grandma, where she is sitting scared. I saw my mother and the rest of the kids. How can I rest in this world? Just . . . I have to wake up every morning and dress myself. What can I do?

No good.

[INTERVIEWER] You were taken from a ghetto to a camp?

Yes. Majdanek. Majdanek again started a new chapter with me. I saw what was going on. It was hot. No water all day long. We was traveling with the horses and with the wagons like . . . A dog has a lovely life on this world. We were worse than like dogs. That's it.

When we arrived they put us on to count, how much "horses" he had. He started to count, and I couldn't stand on my feet. I run into the barrack and I lay down in the barrack and I face into the straw, the mattress. Full of flies and all kinds of junk . . . they make you red, the whole body, they bite you. And I started to cry "Ma, what happened to me? I'm jealous of you. You are over everything already. Why I have still to suffer?" And I fall asleep.

It was hot. . . hungry . . . thirsty . . . filthy.

And I have another . . . her name is Eva, too, from my city, my friend. And she looked over and "Oy! Where is Eva." "And she started asking "Where is Eva?" They don't know. And she run in . . . Till they . . .there was a few thousand people, till they started to count, she run in. I'm laying on this.

She started to wake me, "Chava, come out! Come out!"

I say, "Go to Hell!" And I was screaming. Why? I fall asleep and I saw my mother. And I started crying, "Ma, take a look at what happened to me."

And when she waked me up I was so mad at her. I could kill her at this time. And she said, "Come out! If not . . ."

And later an Obershafuerer came inside, in the blocks . . . looking somebody maybe hiding. They figure maybe I hiding in there and they kill me. And she dragged me out. And I was screaming, cursing her. And still, till now, when I remind her. I grab her and say "Please, you still not mad?"

And she say, "You stupid? I be mad at you? In such a situation? You don't know what you're talking!"

And she grabbed me out. If not, I get killed this time. Maybe . . .

All right, later they send us in. They give us a little soup, you know, the soup. All kinds of worms, grass soup water. They send us to sleep.

The next day they took us to work. I was working this time in the fields. Was May . . . no, this was after Budzin. This was summertime already. They took us to work. I was working in the woods.

What I found a bone, I was crying over this bone. I dig it deep into the earth, so that the bone should have rest. And I was crying, who knows if this is not my father's bones, my neighbor's, my sister's. Look, in a city you know plenty people. And this hurts you . . . the bones . . . fingers, teeth, gums, all kinds of things. One time they was watching us with the big dogs, the German Shepherd. He come over "Piece garbage, what you doing?"

"No, no," I say. "I just straighten . . ." and he went away. He could shoot me, too. I started to cry. And where I was sitting was so hot this time; till I become sunburned. Everyday, everyday, no clothes. Just a little thing to cover up. And I get temperature. And the next day I couldn't go to work. I told the leader from our group, and she went to me, and they let me this day--one day just--to say out from work. They put me to cool off a little bit . . . I was altogether burnt, the whole body.

Later, the next day, I went again to work. And we were over there until they sent us to Majdanek . . . no, this was Majdanek . . . to Auschwitz.

In Auschwitz started again . . .

[INTERVIEWER] How did you get to Auschwitz?

How? They a little on wagons, a little in cars, and we was walking, too.

Later they saw we can't take it anymore, they took wagons -- closed wagons, like for cows or horses -- and they put us over there. And on the way, until we get this, we was walking,

It was raining. I was always afraid of a horse. And this time I was laying in mud, under a horse. I was wondering why the horse doesn't . . . The horse was smarter, better than the S.S. They kicked me nothing. I was laying . . . it was raining, pouring, all night. Nighttime they let us rest . . . it was dark, we couldn't walk, and they was resting too. . . in the cars, in the trucks. We was laying on the earth.

They give us one bread to go and a blanket. We was so weak . . . we lost the bread, we lost the blanket. We was walking maybe about eight days. No food, no nothing. They don't give us nothing.

When someone couldn't go . . . they saw we fall . . .when somebody stopped . . . boom, boom, boom. Right away on the place.

And even when they told us to rest ten minutes, when you walking many hours and a few days . . . your feet . . . when you sit down you can't stand up no more. I couldn't stand up.

And we was walking, walking.

One time I figure it was enough. No. And two men from my camp . . . they saw I was . . . they came and grabbed me and picked me up and I went again.

Until we come . . . they saw it was impossible . . . already they killed more . . . like half. They took trucks and they put us.

And on the way, you need to go, excuse me, with your water.

They stop for a second and say "Who likes to go, let go!" You know . . . they were standing and looking.

One girl went . . . there were trees

She went behind a tree to cover up, she was ashamed, a young girl, maybe about sixteen years. And standing watching us, and boom, right away.

And the Obersharfuher asked . . . this was a soldier who shot . . . "What happened?" "She like to run away." It was a pleasure just to shoot people. That's all, the only thing.

And later, when I saw this, I was afraid to go down. I was standing. It was so crowded. You can't stand even. When you like to look down a little, to sit -- inside you have a place -- like herring we was packed, unbelievable. Screaming, fainting . . . they don't care about nothing. Until we arrived to Auschwitz.

In Auschwitz, we arrived between day and night, it was sort of grayish.

I saw people with no hair, no nothing. Devils. Running. A blanket just cover up. They was running, now . . . later I find out they was moving near the walls to the bathroom, to the toilet, and over there was a *kranz* [a faucet] from water and this way they washed themselves a little. If they find on you a little pimple, you dead. They like you should be good looking and healthy, and clean . . . and they don't give you nothing.

And we was afraid . . . and later I did the same thing. When they find a pimple it was good-by.

Later, the next day, I meet . . . they took us to work.

Yea, when we come to Auschwitz they give us eight days free, not to go to work.

You know why? When we was walking, everybody's feet was swollen, and the skin was rubbed off. It was impossible to walk, and they saw this. And they "Alright," he give us a vacation. And still, after the eight days was not everything whole, good, but still we went to work.

And when we went out the first day I saw a man from my city, from my town, and he was digging, digging, and he say girls, and he recognized me. I say to him "Eh," and he say "Don't talk. Don't show you are talking."

He was standing and said, "Why you let them catch you? Why you come here?" He know we won't come out alive from here?

The ovens was burning, smoke was rolling . . . so dark, dark smoke was rolling.

And when they took to the oven people, was a music, a band. Girls. The girls they have food, these few girls . . . maybe about twenty girls. Short skirts, hats, berets, navy clothes, special.

And they make a "selection", who to take to death, who to live.

They put out like soldiers [she means, in formation] And the band forth, and later they. And they brought . . . for a shower, to take a shower. Not to death, just to give them a shower.

[INTERVIEWER] Did you know that was going on when you got there?

No! I don't know. Later I find out. When I know, I have a choice? I can't help myself. I don't know. Yes, and this man tells me "Why you come here? This is a death place."

And I said to myself, to the other girls "Ah, now we all dead. That's all. No hope, no more."

Later we started to work. I was working . . . stones. They give me a hammer. I was sitting on stones and hit big stones . . . and small stones. Like gravel.

The sun was burning. No kerchief on the head, nothing. No clothes. Hungry.

In the morning we went out, about 4:00 o'clock, 5:00 o'clock. They look us through. And it was so, so cold, let's say before Fall. It's cold in the morning. About 5:00 o'clock it was very cold. We moved closer to each other . . . to cover up a little.

When the S.S. ladies--we had S.S. ladies--Oy! They been worse than the men. They started to hit us. No, straight like soldiers. And we were standing about two hours, about three hours. This was in every . . . even in the ghetto the same thing. Snow, rain, we have to stand. No clothes, no food.

Just black water . . . coffee. Plain water. Black, dirty water. This we had. And 200 gram bread for the whole day.

After the work, when we arrived when we come back, until the next night. The 200 gram we had to have . . . this was so big the bread, [Demonstrates to the interviewer.] This we have working and for all day long . . . except the dirty soup, that's all.

This is nothing. We could survive, except when they shoot us just for nothing. Hunger, no hunger, we survive. Just the shooting was terrible.

And this went on every day.

After the stones, what I did? This go on like this for a half year. I'm lucky, not longer. About a half year. When longer, I no survive altogether.

When we arrived, they took us inside to give a shower. They took away everything that we had. We were sitting on the asphalt, on the floor. Cold, hungry, maybe about five, six hours. Till later, they come in and they give us a rusty can, a rusty plain can. Food, soup. Soup?. . . water! It was like water from a dishwasher. And they give us five girls, one can. No spoon, no nothing. We have to sip from each other. I not used to this life. I don't try the first day, the second day. The third day I have to take a sip. If not . . . I'm in big trouble. [Chuckles] I've been already in big trouble, just, I started . . . all right.

Later they started with working. This, this . . . hitting . . . beating. How much you were working was not enough, was not good for them.

Later they took me to take big stones from one place to another. Just to give you something to do. You know why? Because the S.S. like to save their own skin. This way they don't have to go to the front. They say we working, we producing something. We produce something that we don't need.

We take this stone, let's say, and put it 50 feet farther. That's all. This was the work. But we have to work. When I took a smaller stone, I was too weak, it was no good, . . . it was too small. Over my head! Go back for a bigger one.

Alright. How much I took, I took. One time I took a stone . . . I see I can't survive just from the beatings, and I fall down, with the stone. And I fainted.

She kicked me, "What's the matter with you, piece lump?" She saw I fainted, she picked me up, and the girls she told to give me a little water to bring myself back and she let me take smaller stones. Meanwhile, when I fell with this stone, I hit my leg. I fell down on a stone.

The first day I didn't feel anything, but the next day I feel it hurts me terribly. I can't walk. I'm limping, and I went to work. I was afraid to say. . . they had a little hospital . . . "Ravir" they call this . . . when somebody was sick, or had a temperature, they send them there. And afterwards, when they accumulated a whole room, after this, when it was full already, they went in and shoot the people.

[INTERVIEWER] Because they were sick?

Sick? Weak! It was not sickness. You get weak, from weakness. You get dizzy, headaches, all kinds of things. They shoot out the whole thing when they get full. Later they bring in different people.

And I knew what they were doing. And I was afraid to say my leg hurts. I was limping and went to the work. Till one day I couldn't. In the morning I couldn't go out from the bed. I said to the girls "What should I do?" If I go over there, is after me, I'm finished. I knew it. I knew I could stay there three, four, five days, the most. Later they accumulated, then they shoot everyone.

And the foot started, inside, the bone, to get spoiled. Pus began to form inside. And I couldn't walk, the pain was unbelievable. When I put down my feet, I was biting the board from the bed, because I was afraid to scream.

And the leader that was over us, I told her "Take a look!" I had covered it, but now, unbelievable. I didn't want to go to the Ravir, this little hospital.

She said, "You have to go!"

I said, "No, I don't go."

She reported it. She was afraid I stayed inside. Anyway, I am dead this or this way. And they dragged me in. No Choice. What could I do? I was weak, sick, in pain. What could I do? Nothing.

And they drag me in. And I was over there and I hear . . . One doctor comes over, and asks what's the matter. He looks at the leg, and later he calls in another doctor. They were all S.S., not doctors. And one says to the other, "You know, let's take off a half leg. And we'll see . . . She doesn't need this. We'll take off the leg above where the leg is spoiled."

And I know if they take off the leg . . . They don't let live . . . nice, clean girls they kill, they will keep me with a half leg? Impossible!

And I heard this. They were both standing next to me. And I grabbed his gun. I figured, now, anyway I'm dead. And you know what they did? They took off . . . I heard it . . . a neighbor's boy they did the same thing. Alive. They like to see the reaction how it works on a human being. Not to give anesthesia.

They took off . . . he was screaming. Later the other people told me, they took off, and he survived it. He is now in Israel. A leg, a wooden leg he made himself.

And I know this and I figure I can't survive this. I'm too weak. I'm still a woman. I been this time skinny, no food, no nothing, too weak. I figure No!

And I grabbed his gun from him . . . from this soldier. And I say, "Please, kill me! Kill me! You don't have children? When you don't have something . . . a heart? Why you have to take off my leg later to kill me? Kill me now!"

And I started to scream. The rest girls . . . I don't know myself. I went crazy at this time.

They said, "Eva, if we put a candle to your face, the candle would have lit up."

My whole . . . I didn't know nothing from nothing. I was ready to die. I didn't want to go over this pain of taking off my leg, and later he should kill me. So I took my guts and say "Kill me now!" He become worried. "You don't have children? How you feel if someone do to your child this?"

I started to scream and cry and everything. He became maybe a little scared, a little bit. He was maybe a guy of 40 years, maybe 45. And they both run out.

They run out, and later they send a nurse, and she started to clean up, this garbage and everything. I have a hole here. [She pointed to an indentation on her leg just below the kneel.]

And she clean up. My pain . . . just one God know. I was biting . . . And I was afraid of this too they kill me.

Alright, now I have a hole. Later . . . and I still went to work with this. As long as I was feeling a little better.

And I come for a two, three weeks to this place . . . after a few days I didn't want to stay over there. I want to go out. I say I feel all right. And the nurse gave me a little . . . she feel sorry for me at this time. And she told me to come after work, and I will clean up, replace clean cotton and everything. And that's all. And now I have a hole in the leg.

All right. This was until they decided . . . yea, in the meanwhile they took over there my neighbor's girl--she was skinner than me--she was so skinny, you could count all the bones on her. I maybe had a little more than her. She was 12-years old at this time. She was younger than me.

When they decided to send us to Bergen Belsen, to close Aushwitz. She [the guard] grabbed her, and she say "Come here." And she put her into the crematorium; her and another girl, a few girls.

Later, when we were standing near the gate to go out . . . there was a little window in the crematorium, in the top, like a little window, so big [she demonstrates] you can just see the face, the eyes look out and you can hear the voice and she was screaming . . . she had her mother's sister there [in he line of women about to leave Auschwitz] and she was screaming "Tanta [aunt], why are you leaving me?" We were all crying. At this moment, she is now the mother of two kids, she is a grandma already. At this moment they received a letter not to burn anymore, to stop burning people. They stopped the oven, not to use the oven anymore, and they let her out. And they let her out. She lives now in Israel. She's a lovely girl. When she comes to me, to New York, she visits me. When I go to Israel, I visit her. We are the best friends.

Maybe it is enough today There is no end to my stories.

Later we went to Bergen Belsen.

[INTERVIEWER] Near the end of the war . . . they were trying to close up Auschwitz? Is that why they stopped burning?

Yeah. The people themselves, in Auschwitz, they organized themselves underground. They have some help from Poles, this, this. They had been in Auschwitz and they knew what was going on there. They help the Jews a little bit. And they destroyed one oven. Was one oven less. They couldn't kill so much with the pistols, with the guns. They put in the over faster, cheaper maybe.

The hell with them. Who knows?

[INTERVIEWER] How did they destroy one oven? How?

With ammunition. They had mines. They put mines and it exploded.

There was one oven. But still it was enough. Everyday we went to work we saw such dark smoke. It was rolling, rolling, rolling. I said, "Here rolled another head." It looked like they were talking, like the smoke talk to us, begging us, "Take a look what happened! Save yourself!" It was running, curling. It was terrible the smoke.

Alright. And we went out. Later they took us to . . . there are many stories between when we was walking to Auschwitz, to Bergen Belsen.

I missed plenty things. Very important things. Now I remind myself, when they took us from Budzin . . . from Majdanek they took us to Bergen Belsen, we stopped in the "Tzegelna" [?] before the liberation already.

No, it's impossible. This doesn't work. Please destroy everything. I can't bring out everything, how much I feel.

[INTERVIEWER] It's too much.