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INTERVIEW WITH: Max and Rose Schindler

INTERVIEWER:

DATE:

PLACE:

TRANSCRIBER: Mary T. Herman

1 INTERVIEWER: Now, first of all, I
2 think if you would just each tell your name and--

3 MRS. SCHINDLER: My name is Rose
4 Schindler.

5 INTERVIEWER: And--

6 MR. SCHINDLER: I'm Max Schindler.

7 INTERVIEWER: Max Schindler. And
8 where--I guess, then, I can just ask you where--what
9 happened to you during the war, what happened, when
10 did things start, how old were you?

11 MRS. SCHINDLER: Well, I was
12 13-years-old when the Germans invaded our part of
13 the country. I'm from Czechoslovakia. And they
14 took us to camps right away--I mean, you know, to
15 Auschwitz. I went straight to Auschwitz because it
16 was in '44, almost the end of the war, and I guess
17 that was the last bit of Czechoslovakia that the
18 Germans invaded.

19 INTERVIEWER: How did they find you
20 when they--

21 MRS. SCHINDLER: They just marched
22 in.

23 INTERVIEWER: Marched into your own
24 home or--

25 MRS. SCHINDLER: They marched into

1 our town and they gathered all the Jews into one
2 point and they put us on a kind of like a horse and
3 buggy. What do you call those?

4 MR. SCHINDLER: Carriages.

5 MRS. SCHINDLER: Carts. And they
6 took us to the next town, which was 20 kilometers
7 from my home town, which was (inaudible). They took
8 us to Shor-od. And there we were in a camp for
9 about two weeks. And each day, they shipped off so
10 many to Auschwitz in the trains. So--

11 INTERVIEWER: And what were
12 conditions like in the camp?

13 MRS. SCHINDLER: Undescribable.
14 Unbelievable. I mean, when we came to Auschwitz,
15 they put us in this barrack where we had C-lager,
16 you know, A-B-C, different letters for different
17 people. Our camp was C-lager. We were 1,000 people
18 in one barrack. You can imagine what a barrack
19 is--no sanitation at all. We had to go outdoors.
20 And the first three or four weeks, people were dying
21 like flies.

22 Everybody had diarrhea because they
23 couldn't take--all they gave us was coffee in the
24 morning, and at night--lunchtime, they gave us a
25 slice of bread, and at night, there was a pot of

1 soup for maybe ten people. And the way we ate was
2 to have a sip of the pot. If you were lucky enough
3 to get, you know, hold of the pot and get some soup,
4 then that was your meal.

5 The conditions were just--I mean, you
6 can't describe it. If you would put it on T.V.,
7 people would just faint and they would really--they
8 couldn't even put it on. That's how bad it was. We
9 had to get up every morning to be counted, like 3:00
10 in the morning. They called that C-la-pel. And we
11 would stand in line probably one or two hours till
12 they came to count us, and then we had to do the
13 same thing at night. Twice a day, they would count
14 us. And if you didn't--you know, if everybody
15 wasn't there, it was a lot of trouble.

16 INTERVIEWER: And what kept you
17 going?

18 MRS. SCHINDLER: Hope. Hope.
19 Nothing else but hope. If--you know, if you don't
20 believe in something, then you don't survive, okay?
21 And, you know, there used to be one barrack, which
22 was a bathroom--the toilets and the sinks, no soap,
23 all cold water for, you know--and if you wanted to
24 go there, that's where we used to get all the news.
25 You know? Like--

1 MR. SCHINDLER: Rumors.

2 MRS. SCHINDLER: Rumors, yes. They
3 would say, "Oh, the Russians are coming. The
4 Americans are coming and they're very close."
5 That's what kept us alive, hope that they're coming.
6 Otherwise, we would have never survived, you know.

7 INTERVIEWER: What about your family?

8 MRS. SCHINDLER: I am from eight
9 children, my mother and father. We were ten of us,
10 but that went to Auschwitz, to the gas. Two of us
11 survived. My mother and my father, they went into
12 the gas chambers. My mother and my three
13 sisters--they had a line, okay?

14 When you came out of the train--when
15 we got into Auschwitz, okay?--they opened the train
16 doors. And a man comes up to me and he was wearing
17 a uniform, like stripes, you know? And he says to
18 me, "How old are you?" I said, "I'm thirteen." So
19 he says to me, "Tell them you're 18." I didn't know
20 what he was talking about. And my older sister,
21 Helen, was holding my little sister. So he goes
22 over to her and he says to her, "Is this your little
23 child?" She said, "No. This is my sister."
24 "Good."

25 So, as we walked out, he came up to

1 help us, I guess take some of our stuff down because
2 they told us we could take anything we could carry.
3 We put like three or four dresses on, maybe three or
4 four pairs of socks. Whatever we could put on
5 ourselves, that's what we brought from home.

6 When we came out, we marched to this
7 place and there was a line, women on one side,
8 mothers and children on another side and men on
9 another side. As we come there, this guy--I believe
10 it was Mengele. It was SS men. There were three SS
11 men. I think one was Mengele. He says to me, "How
12 old are you?" I said, "I am 18." My sister says,
13 "No. She's only 13." I said, "No, I'm 18."

14 So they let me go with my two older
15 sisters. My mother and all my little sisters and
16 brothers, they went to a different line. They went
17 straight in the gas chambers. But, you know, if you
18 were not capable of working, they probably wouldn't
19 save you.

20 INTERVIEWER: Did they put you to
21 work at--

22 MRS. SCHINDLER: No, no. I was in
23 Auschwitz in C-lager and that was a
24 vern-ich-stungs-lager and it's like a training--not
25 a training--

1 MR. SCHINDLER: Destruction.

2 MRS. SCHINDLER: No, no.

3 MR. SCHINDLER: Vern-ich-stungs-lager
4 means destruction.

5 MRS. SCHINDLER: Okay. But from that
6 place, they took all the transports to work, okay?
7 It was like an in between.

8 MR. SCHINDLER: Holding camp, like.

9 MRS. SCHINDLER: Yeah. People didn't
10 stay too long in C-lager because, when you got
11 there, they would keep you, say, one week or so or a
12 few days and then send you out to working camps.

13 MR. SCHINDLER: They would either go
14 to working camps or to the crematoria. That's the
15 way they segregated people.

16 MRS. SCHINDLER: Okay. But you see,
17 with me, I was so--first of all, when I got there, I
18 was very sick. I could not even stand on my feet
19 because I couldn't eat the food. I had diarrhea for
20 about six weeks. So every time there was a
21 transportation to be selected to go to work, I was
22 always rejected. My two sisters were always
23 accepted to go.

24 You had to undress naked and stand in
25 front of these SS men to see if your body is strong

1 enough to go to work. Every time, I was rejected,
2 okay? And I was selected many-a-times to go to the
3 gas chambers, but I always ran out. I was a devil.
4 Otherwise, I would have never survived.

5 I was full of, you know--you know,
6 when I was sick, those few weeks, I couldn't even
7 walk. My two sisters had to hold me up. And when
8 we stood in line every day, morning and night, they
9 had to hold me. And the minute the SS would walk
10 by, they would let me go for a minute. They they
11 would--I would always have to pinch my cheeks so I
12 would look nice and healthy, you know. But it
13 wasn't easy, believe me.

14 INTERVIEWER: Could you tell us about
15 some of your escapes--

16 MRS. SCHINDLER: Sure.

17 INTERVIEWER: --when you ran away?

18 MRS. SCHINDLER: They had these--they
19 would come to the barrack and they said they would
20 need 500 women for a working camp, okay? Everybody
21 has to go out through the front door. They would
22 close up the back. Everybody has to go out there,
23 so we go out.

24 One line they had for the women that
25 would be selected to go to work and the other line

1 were the rejects, like me. Three or four times, I
2 was in the reject line and I just ran away. I guess
3 God was with me because they didn't catch me. And
4 my sisters, when they were selected to go into the
5 working lines they kind of got out too because they
6 didn't want to leave me behind, okay?

7 INTERVIEWER: So you just--so they
8 just didn't see you. You just slipped--

9 MR. SCHINDLER: There was some
10 confusion. There was thousands and thousands of
11 people during every meeting, during every mass
12 assembly, which they had every morning.

13 MRS. SCHINDLER: And night.

14 MR. SCHINDLER: Which could last for
15 two hours. There was some confusion. I mean, there
16 was so many troops that could watch us and they
17 watched the first few lines. And then the back few
18 lines, you could reposition yourself and probably
19 run from one area to the other, if you're lucky to
20 not get caught. If--some people would get caught.
21 They would be beaten to death right there on the
22 spot. It happened.

23 MRS. SCHINDLER: Listen. Also, they
24 decide they needed 500 women, right? And there's a
25 thousand women in the barrack, so they tell you the

1 ones that are selected to go to work. They will
2 count them and after the 500, go back in the
3 barracks, because they have enough, okay? So my two
4 sisters were always ready--selected to go to work,
5 to a working camp, but not me.

6 And how I got out was another
7 miracle. You know, always rumors, you know. People
8 live on rumors. There was a rumor that they needed
9 300 women for this very good working camp. So--and
10 I was already in that camp with my two sisters,
11 probably for, I would say, three months. Nobody
12 stayed more than two weeks in that place because you
13 couldn't survive; the conditions are so bad. I
14 mean, we were full of lice on our bodies because we
15 didn't have anything to wash ourselves with. We had
16 one dress. When we arrived to Auschwitz, they took
17 (inaudible). The things they did to us, okay? I
18 mean, have you ever seen movies on Auschwitz?

19 INTERVIEWER: Yes, yes. I mean, I've
20 seen them.

21 MRS. SCHINDLER: How the barbed
22 wires are? Okay. One day, we're standing in line
23 and they give us the bread and a square of butter.
24 And me, I always had a big mouth. Even today, you
25 know, I am not afraid to speak up. That's how I

1 survived. Because from my own home town, I don't
2 think there were ten of us my age that survived.
3 And as they're dishing out all the bread and the
4 butter to everybody--you know, they come around and
5 give you a piece--I said to the stu-ben-al-ter,
6 they used to call it, person in charge--

7 MR. SCHINDLER: That's a leader,
8 like.

9 MRS. SCHINDLER: The people in
10 charge, they're our own people, okay? I said, "Hey,
11 you cut my butter in half."

12 MR. SCHINDLER: It wasn't butter. It
13 was--

14 MRS. SCHINDLER: Whatever.
15 Margarine, okay? I said, "You didn't give me my
16 portion." I got beaten so badly, I was black and
17 blue all over my body. I couldn't stand up for
18 three days, okay? So my sister said, "Next time,
19 you keep your mouth shut." Okay?

20 But, you know, I was very alert, even
21 though the first few weeks I was very sick. Then I
22 got a little better, okay? Actually, I had cousins
23 in one of the barracks and we transferred from one
24 barrack to the other. Because the barrack--all the
25 people went to work and we were left behind, so we

1 had to go to another barrack. And we found out that
2 there were some cousins there. And they were kind
3 of in charge and they put me back on my feet, okay?

4 INTERVIEWER: What did you do when
5 you were left in the barrack with all the rest? How
6 did you amuse yourselves or how did you--

7 MRS. SCHINDLER: Amuse!

8 INTERVIEWER: I shouldn't say amuse.

9 MRS. SCHINDLER: Excuse me.

10 THE INTERVIEWER: How did you pass
11 the time? What went on?

12 MRS. SCHINDLER: Doing nothing. You
13 see, a lot of the camps were--people were working,
14 but in that camp where I was, there was no work
15 because they took all the people from our camp to
16 work, okay? But I wasn't fit to go to work. We
17 didn't amuse ourselves.

18 MR. SCHINDLER: It's called
19 surviving. We were just sitting there.

20 MRS. SCHINDLER: I mean, sometimes--

21 MR. SCHINDLER: Vegetating.

22 MRS. SCHINDLER: Yes.

23 MR. SCHINDLER: Sitting, holding on
24 to the blanket that you had, if you did have one.

25 MRS. SCHINDLER: Blanket! Who had a

1 blanket?

2 MR. SCHINDLER: --if you did have
3 one. In some cases you had a blanket for two or
4 three people, in our area.

5 MRS. SCHINDLER: Not for our camp.

6 MR. SCHINDLER: Because we were in
7 some cold country. And you just vegetated. You
8 just waited for the day to pass and maybe tomorrow
9 something will happen and you'll be closer to the
10 day where you'll be liberated. That's what we were
11 waiting for.

12 MRS. SCHINDLER: We had no blankets,
13 believe me. You know, we had like--in our barrack,
14 they had like bunk beds, okay?--three bunk beds, ten
15 people to one bunk bed. And you know what kept us
16 warm?

17 INTERVIEWER: Each other.

18 MRS. SCHINDLER: Each other. We had
19 no blankets, no nothing underneath. It was just
20 wood, okay? So, I mean, there was no amuse--there
21 was--I really don't know how we survived. I cannot
22 believe how we survived, okay? And if you were not
23 strong, you could not survive. You really had to be
24 strong because people were just flying like dies--I
25 mean, dying like flies. You know, some of them were

1 so desperate that they would jump on the electric
2 fences.

3 INTERVIEWER: To die.

4 MRS. SCHINDLER: To die. That's
5 right. They couldn't take it any more. And you
6 could see like, you know, we could see from our
7 C-lager to the next. Like next to us was a gypsy
8 lager, you know?--gypsy camp. And on the other side
9 was a Czech camp. And we could, you know, see and
10 we sometime would talk to the people. And some of
11 them, they--they would just give up and they
12 would--if we were so close talking to each other,
13 they would just put their hands and all you see is
14 blood coming out of their noses and they were dead.
15 It happened so fast.

16 So, it's really unbelievable what
17 those Germans did. I just cannot understand it. I
18 mean, I had little sisters--my mother was pregnant
19 when she went into the gas chamber. Little kids
20 from 2 to 12-years-old all went straight in the gas
21 chambers. Did anybody ever tell you how this
22 happened, how they did it?

23 INTERVIEWER: How they gassed you?

24 MRS. SCHINDLER: How they--yes, how
25 you went into the gas chambers. They told you that

1 they were bathrooms. Okay. As we came into this,
2 there was a big building, okay? And they made us
3 strip, take all our clothes away, okay? That's even
4 before going into the bathroom, okay?

5 When we came in, it was probably like
6 5:00, 6:00, and I saw a big, big fire--I don't know
7 if you heard of this. That's in Birkenau, the gas
8 chamber--a huge fire, like behind the building. And
9 you could hear screaming and children calling
10 mothers' names and, you know, children were looking
11 for their mothers. And you could hear them crying
12 and screaming and you could see little shadows
13 running through the fire. If you can imagine hell,
14 that's what that was like.

15 And as we were standing in line
16 after, you know, they came out, they shaved all our
17 hair off. We were all naked. SS men were taking
18 pictures of us, and as we came out, they gave us
19 some ridiculous clothes, not what we came in with.
20 I don't know why they didn't give us back our own
21 clothes.

22 MR. SCHINDLER: They saved the
23 clothes. They saved the spectacles. They saved the
24 shoes. They refurbished it all back into their
25 country, the Germans. They saved all the jewelries.

1 They would pile it up and they would stockpile this
2 back into their own country. And also, they--like
3 she said, they documented things, they photographed
4 things. I'm sure all these things are available and
5 they may even be in the United States.

6 And they should be released, not
7 closed archives, if you know what I mean. This
8 information should be released and made public to
9 the rest of the world. It should not be hidden.
10 And I believe it is being hidden.

11 INTERVIEWER: They're working very
12 hard to release it.

13 MR. SCHINDLER: Right. I mean, we're
14 trying to make some effort, some publicity towards
15 that this should not be kept secret any longer. I
16 agree that it must have--you know, it's a good idea
17 to have kept it secret for 20 years, 25 years, for
18 people that are involved with it to sort of age the
19 problem slightly, but there comes a time when it
20 can't be kept secret any more and it shouldn't be
21 buried. And what I'm afraid is happening now, it's
22 being buried; it's being pushed aside. It will
23 never be surfaced and that's the problem. My story
24 is completely different to hers.

25 MRS. SCHINDLER: Well--

1 INTERVIEWER: Let's hear your story.

2 MR. SCHINDLER: Well, with me it
3 started at the age of nine, if you can believe that,
4 in 1938. I was actually born in Germany, which is
5 now East Germany on--you know, under the Russian
6 side. And I was born of Polish parents, which made
7 me Polish. In those countries, you don't attain
8 citizenship until you're 21 and you go through the
9 ceremonies of becoming a citizen, so I was
10 considered Polish.

11 The day--on a certain day, somewhere,
12 I think it was September of '38 when Hitler did not
13 get the Polish Corridor from the Polish government,
14 saying he wants Danzig, the area, he shipped all
15 Polish nationals, which were 95 percent Jewish, to
16 Poland in one night.

17 They congregated--well, they were--
18 how shall we say--they were organized, okay?
19 Germany is organized. And they knew exactly where
20 each person lives and they rounded up all the Polish
21 citizens and got them to certain trains from each
22 city, took the trains, pushed them over the border
23 and left them standing there. Took off the engine
24 and went back and left the trains standing in three
25 or four strategic points inside Poland over the

1 border. I can't even remember the name of one of
2 them.

3 Anyway, my whole family was evacuated
4 that way. They took me physically from the school
5 as I left the classes. On that day, from class, two
6 SS men came and escorted me to the holding area,
7 which was a local jail, and says, "Wait here for
8 your family and they'll be coming." And luckily,
9 somehow, we got together and were then put on a
10 train and pushed over the border.

11 During the time that--as this was
12 happening to me, that they sort of incarcerated me,
13 my parents said no way will they leave without, you
14 know, me coming home first. So, during that time,
15 they had time to pack three suitcases. And somehow,
16 word got to them that they found me and I was in the
17 jail. Then they took those three suitcases and,
18 with no other cash or anything--we couldn't
19 accommodate anything--we were pushed over the
20 border.

21 We did have--my father had family and
22 my mother had family in Poland, so rather than being
23 locked up or held in those receiving camps in
24 Poland--because people didn't have anywhere else to
25 go, so they just stuck them in certain camps and

1 Jewish organizations would try and take care of
2 them--we got in touch with some of our family and
3 they had wired some money to some local--maybe it
4 was the railroad depot. Anyway, we made our way
5 into inland Poland on our own with some money being
6 wired from family. So my hell started in '38.

7 So we then worked our way to inner
8 Poland, where my grandmother used to live in some
9 village between Now-y-Salz and Jas-lo. And for--
10 well, it was still a year before the war, I was put
11 through Polish schools and we started all over
12 again. You know, I spoke German, and we went to
13 Polish schools for a year and we suffered the--well,
14 how should we say this--the hate of the Polish
15 people.

16 The Polish people were known to be
17 terrible anti-Semites. They were brought up that
18 way. The Pope imbedded this kind of thought in them
19 for generations, that the Jews killed Christ,
20 therefore they have to suffer. I think maybe in the
21 last 30 years things changed slightly. I'm not sure
22 that it changed much. It changed slightly.

23 And we, like I say, lived in that
24 village for a year when Hitler came over the border
25 and invaded Poland. And we had fears of being taken

1 into camps and so on and so we started sort of
2 running from one city to the other. While they were
3 bombing this city, we tried to run to the other
4 city. And that lasted for about--the war in Poland
5 was over very quickly.

6 The war in Poland was won not only by
7 Germany; it was won for Germany by the Poles. They
8 had volksdeutschen. Eighty percent of the Poles
9 were quietly volksdeutschen and they helped the
10 Germans and they pointed the finger to every Jew
11 that was available and they put the sufferings--you
12 know, they actually dished out the suffering before
13 it was necessary. Hitler's extermination didn't
14 truly start until 1942.

15 When Hitler finally got organized to
16 saying that he will clean this whole region of his
17 and make it Judenrein, which means free of Jews and
18 free of cripples and free of gypsies and free of
19 non-Aryans--and I guess you had to have blue eyes
20 and blonde hair, so I was close. In those days, I
21 had blonde hair and green eyes, but I still didn't
22 make it. The Jews had a curved nose, as far as--on
23 his caricatures. I don't know if you've seen them,
24 these caricatures.

25 Anyway, so between 1939 and '42, we

1 learned to live under German occupation in Poland
2 and somehow got along with the German occupation
3 troops and somehow survived the Polish hatred
4 towards the Jews because we were in sort of a
5 smaller village and got by. My mother had a farm.
6 We worked on a farm and--

7 MRS. SCHINDLER: Your grandmother,
8 you mean.

9 MR. SCHINDLER: Excuse me. My
10 grandmother had a farm and we worked there and we
11 played there and we survived. And we--what helped
12 us to survive those three years were the three
13 suitcases of clothing and miscellaneous little items
14 that we brought in from the more civilized
15 society--because we came from a city rather than a
16 village--and we traded those items for food. We
17 would trade it for meat, we would trade it for
18 breads, we would trade it for honey and for other
19 things that were necessary to help us survive and
20 grow.

21 Like I said, you know, when it
22 started, I was 9, so in '42, I was close to 13. At
23 that time, Hitler's stormtroopers started collecting
24 all the Jews into either ghettos or destruction
25 camps or work camps. And they didn't do it alone.

1 They did it with the help of the Poles. And I was
2 lucky-- well, I shouldn't say it that way. We
3 purchased our way into a working camp, being able to
4 speak German fluently. My father spoke German
5 fluently.

6 Our family consisted of five people--
7 me, my brother, my sister and my parents. We had
8 amongst our things--I'm gonna backtrack. During the
9 year of '38 and '39, we were able to ship our
10 belongings from Germany to Poland, our entire
11 furniture and belongings, because we still had
12 somebody in Germany that we contacted and we were
13 able to somehow get our furniture moved into Poland,
14 so--which stayed in Poland and as soon as the
15 Germans came in, they expropriated that.

16 But somehow, we managed to hide an
17 office--you know, sort of a desk office set, which
18 used to be in those days marble blotters, marble ink
19 pens, marble ink wells--a very fancy little set,
20 probably weighed, I don't know, very heavy
21 marbleized type stuff. We used that thing to buy
22 our way into working camp. Actually gave it as a
23 gift to some German over there who was running that
24 camp and finagled our way into the working camp.
25 And there was inside Poland, not far from the area

1 where we lived during the German occupation.

2 INTERVIEWER: So you worked in the
3 working camp. What kind of work?

4 MRS. SCHINDLER: We built bridges and
5 roads. The Germans finished it. I think that the
6 Poles started it, but anyway, in that area they
7 built a large electrical power station, a--run on
8 water, hydroelectric-type power station. And in
9 order to do that, they had to build a huge reservoir
10 of water, and they had to build roads higher in the
11 elevations to, you know, allow for transportation.
12 We worked on roads, bridges and miscellaneous stuff
13 like that. And that lasted for about a year.

14 INTERVIEWER: And that was your whole
15 family?

16 MR. SCHINDLER: That was the whole
17 family at that time. Our family stayed together for
18 the first year. In 1943, they shipped us off to
19 Miel-itz, which is another working camp inside
20 Poland called Parta-gal-iz-i-a, where the Germans
21 had a factory, an aircraft factory.

22 And our family still stayed together
23 in that particular camp. And we arrived somewhere
24 in the fall, and that winter in that camp was
25 disastrous. Our work would be mixed-type work,

1 either working in the factory or go out in the
2 airfields to clear the snow for them to--you know,
3 as they build planes, they would ship them off
4 somewhere--and work on the airports or in the
5 factory or in the power stations shoveling coal and
6 stuff like that.

7 The camp consisted probably of about
8 4,000 people. It was considered a working camp.
9 Conditions in there were as appalling as in any
10 other camp. We would live in barracks. We would
11 have no sanitation inside the barracks. We would
12 have water somewhere in the middle of the courtyard,
13 all open-air, you know, with a long pipe, and in the
14 morning you'd get up and wash, if you can.

15 And the bread, the food would be
16 rationed out three times a day--black coffee in the
17 morning, which I used to throw up from after a
18 while. I just couldn't take it. It probably wasn't
19 really--it wasn't coffee. It looked black. I'm not
20 sure what it was.

21 Lunchtime, there would be something
22 that resembled soup, which was probably grass or
23 spinach and it was always gritty and, you know,
24 sandy and hardly ever was there anything other
25 than--floating there, you know, like a piece of

1 potato or a piece of skin or something. Hardly ever
2 anything like that would float through the soup. At
3 night time, we would get a slice of bread and, once
4 in a while, a piece of margarine to go along with
5 it.

6 The idea was to save some of this for
7 the next morning so that you could make it through
8 till the next day. In most cases, people would eat
9 whatever they got at the time they got it because,
10 if you didn't, thievery would go on between the
11 inmates and our own people. It was survival. In
12 other words, you could not hide a piece of bread
13 under your bunk or under your body and expect it to
14 be there the next morning.

15 In fact, you'd have to hold onto your
16 clothes very tightly or the same thing could happen.
17 You could lose a shoe or a pair of shoes and you
18 would be left in the cold, or you could lose a
19 jacket or the prisoner uniforms. They were all blue
20 and white striped, which were reissued every few
21 months. You know, they would wear down into
22 nothing.

23 And periodically they set up showers.
24 You'd go into one end and take off all your clothes
25 and leave it on this end and you come out the other

1 end and they'll give you a new set. And if you're
2 lucky, it fit; if not, you had to make do.

3 In order to survive the cold, and it
4 was bitter cold in those areas, we would get ahold
5 of cement paper, cement paper bags, big bags from
6 cement, wrap them around our legs under the pants
7 and in the shoes to get a little insulation to keep
8 a little bit warmer. And that's how we survived
9 some of the winters. There was no heat of any kind
10 in the barracks. That's how we survived that first
11 camp.

12 As the liberating forces--Americans
13 and Russians from this end, English from that
14 end--came slightly closer, they would evacuate us
15 into other areas. Hitler had the marvelous--or some
16 idiot--had the marvelous idea of taking that
17 airplane factory with all its equipment and stick it
18 underground into a salt mine and work and build
19 airplanes in the salt mine and be free from bombing
20 raids, you know, be secure and don't have to worry
21 about bombing raids.

22 And we were part of the working force
23 to drag this equipment down into the salt mines in
24 Wieliczka, which was not too far away from Krakow.
25 And, of course, no sooner did we put it in, the

1 stuff started rusting and we had to get the stuff
2 back out again and there was another good six to
3 eight months of some wasted effort and idiotic labor
4 and suffering.

5 And during all this time, some
6 people, of course, would try to escape. And if they
7 did get caught, they would be strung up inside the
8 camp on telephone poles for everybody to see. And
9 if there was any kind of fingerpointing, that so and
10 so is attempting to escape, the same thing could
11 happen. They would take people, they would string
12 them up as a warning to others not to try and
13 escape. That was '42 '43.

14 INTERVIEWER: So, how did you
15 escape?

16 MR. SCHINDLER: How did we escape?

17 MRS. SCHINDLER: We didn't.

18 MR. SCHINDLER: I did not escape. I
19 did not escape. I went on from this camp to another
20 camp. And, of course, the transportation was in
21 cattle cars. I don't know how many they stuffed
22 into open cattle cars and dragged us around inside
23 Poland. And it's interesting to know that the
24 majority of camps were in Poland, not on German
25 soil.

1 INTERVIEWER: Yes, I saw that in the
2 paper.

3 MR. SCHINDLER: And they dragged us
4 along to another camp called Plaszow, where there
5 was an area called Yas-nig-our-a, which was a larger
6 camp. And one of the SS men--I forget his name--had
7 a famous hill where he would make open graves and
8 just for pleasure machine-gun a bunch of people and
9 bury them and periodically do that again; raise soil
10 on top of it, machine gun more people and
11 periodically do it again.

12 Somehow, we were lucky. It didn't
13 happen to me. At that time, in that particular--
14 that third camp, we were already separated from my
15 mother and sister. I was still lucky to survive
16 with my father and brother. That camp was--when we
17 got to it, it was already close to the end of '43
18 and the push from Russia into Poland was on its way
19 and they had to liquidate that camp. In other
20 words, either they erased it so that nobody should
21 see it--and we were part of that force to liquidate
22 that camp, you know, disen--how shall we say
23 it?--tear down the barracks and ship it out
24 somewhere else.

25 And when that was all done, they

1 shipped us into through Germany and we started again
2 in another camp. And that particular camp had
3 probably around 2,500 people.

4 (End of Tape)

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1 TAPE NO. 59, Part II, Side 2

2 INTERVIEW WITH: SONJA ROSENHALD??? [MAX & ROSE SCHINDLER?]

3 REPORTER-TRANSCRIBER: JOHN W. SCHRIMPER, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

4
5 [NOTE: ALTHOUGH THE PERSON INTERVIEWED WAS DESIGNATED ON
6 THE LABEL OF THE CASSETTE TAPE AS BEING SONJA ROSENHALD,
7 AT THE START OF THE TAPE A MALE INDIVIDUAL IS ANSWERING
8 QUESTIONS.]

9 (By a man's voice)

10 A/ . . --labor camps, that there are Jews incarcerated,
11 that there are Jews being used as forced labor in the prisoner
12 uniforms; and I think he was genuine. In other words, he
13 didn't-- He said that he doesn't know that he never heard
14 of this. But we were physically there. O. K.?

15 So once in a while he would bring a piece of extra
16 bread out to me. That did happen. There were some people
17 that would help. I did not see this kind of help in Poland,
18 however.

19 In that particular camp, our camp was underground,
20 like a bomb shelter. That's where they kept-- Our sleeping
21 quarters, let's say, were in the bomb shelters.

22 And, of course, there were bombing raids going on.
23 During the-- I don't know if you remember that Dresden was
24 razed in one night. There were two air raids in Dresden.
25 Our camp was three or four miles outside of Dresden. We were

1 part and parcel of that air raid.

2 The factory was bombed, the quarters were destroyed.
3 They pumped us into that air raid shelter. The factory
4 caught on fire. We had to run out.

5 In that particular camp, there were actually no
6 wires, because, you know, it was like a factory. Normally,
7 you wouldn't be able to get out. But during the air raids,
8 we -- we somehow got out in open grounds.

9 But it was-- I think it was early-- It may have been
10 early '45.

11 WOMAN'S VOICE: Excuse me while you talk.

12 A End of '44 or early '45. And we found ourselves
13 free outside and didn't know what to do. We were in uniform.
14 It was freezing cold.

15 We could see the whole city running, like in a
16 commotion. From the air raid, they were running this way
17 and that way. And we decided not to run, because we probably
18 wouldn't survive. Somebody would point a finger, and we
19 would be picked up and destroyed anyway.

20 So I, my brother, many, many others, after the
21 air raid floated back into the vicinity where that particu-
22 lar camp was.

23 And the guns from the English and Russians and
24 Americans were coming from the other side, were constantly
25 there. The war was going on. It just took them forever to

1 get close and take that part of the country.

2 At that time the S. S. and the stormtroopers de-
3 cided to take us further away from that part of the country,
4 and we went on a forced march in the wintertime into Czecho-
5 slovakia over the mountains. And that's pretty wild terrain.
6 We went on a forced march, like I said.

7 We probably started off with 2,000 or 2500 people.
8 I don't know that more than 400 people made it through the
9 march.

10 It took us weeks and weeks and weeks. People
11 would fly -- or, fall off on the wayside and just expire,
12 couldn't get on, or would be shot.

13 When we got to Czechoslovakia, again, we would
14 walk on this side of the river; the American bombers were
15 bombing this side. We were over here, they would bomb over
16 there.

17 We were-- You know, the liberating forces were
18 behind us, always behind us and never catching up. And this
19 was going on for years. It was unbelievable.

20 And we were never caught up in a true air raid that
21 we actually lost people. You know what I mean? I don't
22 know if it was a miracle or whether it was planned that way.

23 But after that forced march we found ourselves in
24 Czechoslovakia in Theresienstadt. That particular camp is
25 one of the-- It's like a ghetto. It was not a working camp.

1 It was not a crematoria. It was like a large, large ghetto
2 of gathering people and not letting them go. You know,
3 enough of them would die from all kinds of horrible diseases.

4 And I survived in Theresienstadt, after going
5 through about five different camps.

6 A few days before the liberation, the camp commander
7 or the ghetto commander of Theresienstadt had plans to gas
8 the entire camp.

9 That camp was built in like an old army barracks
10 with moats around it, like an old castle. And they had plans
11 to-- There was water in those moats around it. They had
12 plans to drop in some kind of gas, which would -- of course,
13 the fumes would go throughout the camp, and they would gas
14 the entire population at that time.

15 Somehow that word got out to the liberating troops.
16 There was combination of Americans and English and Russians.
17 And they came-- In other words, they were made aware of
18 that, and they liberated that camp one day earlier and saved
19 the entire population of inmates at the time.

20 When it was over, I did not have the opportunity
21 to go out on liberation day and at least give a hollo or a
22 scream or a yell or a -- kick somebody in the pants, or any-
23 thing. I came down with typhoid fever the day of the libera-
24 tion, and I was laid up for over six weeks.

25 And when I came out of it, I came out of it with

1 my brother. My father was gone at the time. And-- (Pause.)

2 Q How did you-- When your father-- You say your
3 father was with you in -- near Dresden?

4 A O. K. On the march, on the forced march, our father
5 was with us, and he survived the march by us, by me and my
6 brother, carrying him a lot of the way, with some of our
7 friends helping to carry him a lot of the way.

8 And it's a funny thing, human nature. When you
9 have something to strive for, you have the energy, and you
10 somehow gather the energy, and you make it. And he made it
11 into Theresienstadt. But when we came into Theresienstadt,
12 of course, he fell deathly ill, and he was rushed off to that
13 area, and we were rushed off to that area, and we were
14 separated, and there was no way to get together again.

15 During the few weeks before the-- I was in Theresien-
16 stadt a short period of time before the liberation. The
17 liberation took place in May, May 8 or May 7, in that vicinity.

18 Like I said, he fell deathly ill and was sort of
19 quarantined. And the only thing I could do was go up to the
20 building and talk through the window or hollo through the
21 window or something.

22 And on liberation day or the day before liberation
23 day, I came down with typhoid fever. Six weeks later, or
24 when I got out of it, there was no -- no sight or sound or
25 evidence or documentation or anything, of my father. And it

1 was-- You know, some of the friends that we were together
2 through this ordeal with, they have kept it from me truth-
3 fully, saying, "Your father died," or this. They would--
4 Nobody would say that your father actually passed away on
5 that-and-that day in that-and-that place.

6 So for a while we still had hopes that maybe he
7 got liberated and pushed off to some other rehabilitation
8 or receiving camp or anything like that.

9 But it did not materialize.

10 + + + +

11
12 AT THIS POINT ON THE TAPE, A WOMAN ALSO IS ANSWERING THE
13 QUESTIONS; THE MAN, EVIDENTLY HER HUSBAND AND THE PERSON
14 DESIGNATED "A" ON THE PRECEDING PAGES 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and
15 19, CONTINUES TO COMMENT. FOR CLARITY, HENCEFORTH THE
16 REPORTER-TRANSCRIBER WILL DESIGNATE THEM, "MAN" AND "WOMAN."

17
18 Q I want to ask you also how you two met.

19 MAN: How did we meet? An interesting story.

20 WOMAN: O. K. I tell you how we met.

21 After I was liberated, I went home to my home town
22 with my two sisters.

23 MAN: Which was in?

24 WOMAN: In Czechoslovakia. To see who came home, who
25 was coming home. Because we were hoping maybe our mother or

1 father would come home, my brother. So we went back to my
2 home town.

3 Nobody came back.

4 We stayed about two months. Nobody came home.

5 And that happened with all the survivors, I think.

6 Most of them went home to see if anybody would come home
7 from the camps. It's natural, you know.

8 Nobody came home. So we decided to leave. From my
9 town where I was born, we went to Prague. O. K.?

10 In Prague my older sister found out that they had
11 a transport going to England. You had to be under 16, and
12 the "Hyess" was sponsoring it. We are all orphans.

13 They were going to send us to England into a
14 kibbutz like "Hutchera," and we were going to go to Israel.

15 So I was their age, so my sister said, "Why don't
16 you go?" And I went. I registered, and they accepted me,
17 and I went to England. O. K.?

18 MAN: At the end of '45.

19 WOMAN: No right after. Nein. No. January '46.

20 MAN: O. K.

21 WOMAN: We stayed a few months, you know, a couple
22 of months in Prague, a couple of months at home in my home
23 town. But in 1946, I think, the "Hyess," which is like
24 United Jewish Federation really -- in England they call it
25 "Hyess" -- they took probably about 3,000 kids from

1 Czechoslovakia and brought them to England.

2 MAN: In various transports.

3 WOMAN: In various transports. O. K.?

4 MAN: Fine.

5 WOMAN: And they put us in different hostels. And we
6 were all very young. And they sent us to school. And we
7 were working in the kibbutz. And most of us were supposed
8 to go to Israel.

9 So I was not ready to go to Israel. So I was in
10 this hostel in Scotland. We went to Scotland. From Croft
11 to Scotland. There were three or four hundred kids.

12 We stayed there about a year. And a lot of them
13 went to Israel. I didn't want to go. So they told me,
14 "There's another kibbutz close to London in Bedford."

15 So I said, "Fine. I'll go to that kibbutz," which
16 was like maybe 15 kilometers from London.

17 And when I got to Bedford, there I met my husband.

18 MAN: Yes.

19 WOMAN: He was in that kibbutz.

20 MAN: I was in a group of orphans which they selected
21 out of Theresienstadt. And at that time we had to be under
22 16 in order to qualify. And, of course, a young Jewish fellow
23 being able to take care of themselves through the years, also
24 was able to cheat sometimes on the age.

25 But I personally was under 16. My brother was

1 over 16. But I says, "I'm not going to go without my brother."
2 And so we made it, both of us, into that particular group of
3 people.

4 We stayed in Prague for a period of four weeks.

5 WOMAN: To get us ready for the transport.

6 MAN: Waiting, to wait for the transports. We flew
7 over in American bombers into England and were sitting on
8 the floor with the bomb doors hanging-- I mean, you could
9 see through. The planes in those days were slightly differ-
10 ent than today. You could see through, the terrain, through
11 the panels, the ridges where the doors were.

12 So we were sitting or lying in those plane, prob-
13 ably 60 of us in a plane, and we were shipped into England.

14 And, of course, we went into rehabilitation, be-
15 cause this was after I had typhoid, and there was a few
16 other things wrong with me. And we were put into quarantines
17 in Windermere, which is a lake district of England. There
18 was about 300 of us with serious problems: tb's, this, that.

19 And after a year and a half of rehabilitation
20 there, we were given the opportunity to move on to the cities.

21 And London was given as a choice, Bedford was
22 given as a choice. I chose Bedford, which, as she said, was
23 outside, not too far from London itself.

24 They had groups of us boys-- We used to call our-
25 selves boys. Ours were all boys. We didn't have any girls

1 in our groups. They had them in Wilton, they had them in
2 Bedford, and then they had them in London.

3 WOMAN: How about Windermere?

4 MAN: Windermere was the first one. I mentioned that.

5 WOMAN: Uh-huh. O. K.

6 MAN: In Bedford we were, like she said, on training to
7 either go on to Israel, [One-syllable word, inaudible on
8 tape due to mechanical distortion and considerable background
9 voices] or be accepted to America if we had families.

10 In order to get into the United States in those
11 days, we had to go through the normal immigration, wait for
12 visas, wait for somebody sponsoring you, be part of the
13 family.

14 This is not true today when the immigrants come to
15 this country. It's another wrong that was done in 1945 that
16 the world does not know about. In other words, we were part
17 of the quota system.

18 We went through hell, we went through holocaust
19 survival. We were not allowed or accepted into this country
20 with any kind of privilege. We had to come on a quota system.
21 We had to find a relative that would sponsor us and would
22 qualify with affidavits and monetary support, whatever he
23 wanted.

24 In other words, you could not become a burden of--

25 WOMAN: The state.

1 MAN: --the state, which we didn't want to, because at
2 the time we came in here, we were young and capable and work-
3 ing. And most of us had education of some sort.

4 WOMAN: Yes, 12 years of "finn."

5 MAN: Well, we had some education, but we had some addi-
6 tional training during the rehabilitation, and we were bi-
7 lingual in many languages [inaudible].

8 We did have the opportunity to go to Israel. Some
9 people did go to Israel. We did have the opportunity after
10 a while to stay in England.

11 When we came into England, our papers were temporary.
12 England would not accept us. America would not accept us.
13 The world would not accept us.

14 In Israel you could vote till Israel became a
15 nation.

16 Q Since the experiences in the Holocaust, how have
17 you been able to go on with your lives, to deal with it?
18 How were you able to-- How did you-- I mean, you looked as
19 though--

20 MAN: Time-- Time does things to you. You put certain
21 things in the back of your mind. It's there, it never dis-
22 appears, and it's always there.

23 It is sometimes difficult to recall a particular
24 moment and, well, to be able to talk about it. I shy away
25 from talking about specifics because I would probably become

1 speechless in the middle of it.

2 We have the same burden when we communicate with
3 our children. Our children -- we have four of them -- the
4 oldest is 28, the youngest is 23 -- have all graduated from
5 colleges. They are all on their own, thank goodness. In
6 other words, we've made it, they've made it; we've contributed to
7 this society tremendously.

8 I worked as a computer specialist-systems analyst
9 for the last 22 years. At one time we held a store. My wife
10 was running a fabric shop, which we started on our own. And
11 after the landlord wanted too much money for renewal of
12 leases, we told him to go to you-know-where, and I said,
13 "Go take it and run it yourself."

14 So, of course, the store stood empty for a year,
15 and he didn't do anything more with it anyway.

16 What I am trying to point out is that we are
17 capable people, we are industrious people. You'll find
18 that most survivors are extremely, extremely industrious
19 and outgoing and part of society.

20 We lived the bad parts, and we want to live the
21 good parts. That describes the good living which we--

22 (Inaudible)

23 Q Did you find now any anti-Semitism against you per-
24 sonally where you live? Do you see signs of this rising in
25 this country?

1 MAN: I do see signs of it appearing. I think in some
2 cases I would say the media is to blame. I would say that
3 in some cases if they would squelch-- When a problem arises,
4 if they would squelch it and only publicize it at the time
5 that they have a conviction, we would be ahead. In other
6 words, don't bury it. I don't want nobody to bury any
7 truth. But I don't want to publicize when things happen,
8 you know, controversial things happen.

9 Let's publicize when things happen which puts
10 things right. In other words, somebody gets killed, let's
11 start publicizing it when the murderer gets put to jail.
12 And when they deface a synagogue or a cemetery, let's start
13 publicizing when they find the criminal, which the police
14 has a pretty good record of doing, but somehow at that time
15 it doesn't hit the media.

16 And you see this during the Lebanon when Israel
17 was fighting the war. You see the horrible things that are
18 taken out of context and shown over and over again in a
19 25-second film flash. You will see the same stupid picture
20 reappearing six times. And somebody that is not sharp doesn't
21 catch that.

22 But I'm aware of it. I will catch that.

23 And what-- You know, that's-- That's distortion.

24 So what I'm trying to say is the media can help a
25 lot by publicizing it in a controlled and in a manner which

1 will help put this type of thing to an end, bring it to an
2 end, bring it to a good conclusion.

3 WOMAN: You know, the Jew is always the scapegoat. O. K.?
4 And also with Israel. I mean, everything is really overdone.
5 O. K.? I mean, things happen in this country, and nothing
6 is said about it. Like what happened with the massacre, you
7 know. It's very unfortunate thing.

8 But did they ever publicize it so much when the
9 Arabs killed their own kind? You know, they were killing
10 them, who knows how many years?

11 Nobody ever said nothing. Nobody ever did any-
12 thing.

13 What happened was very unfortunate, those 200
14 people that were killed there. And Israel was to blame so
15 terribly.

16 But I don't think it was really all Israel's fault.
17 It's their own people that did it, not Israel.

18 But anyway, that's not our affair, you know. It
19 is and it isn't.

20 MAN: It hurts when you see the finger being pointed
21 always when something goes wrong and very little when some-
22 thing is corrected.

23 Q Anything that you are doing to counter this? Any
24 activities that you're involved in?

25 MAN: We belong to Jewish organizations which try to

1 promote the more positive points of Jewishness and which, you
2 know, also try to influence our senators, our leaders, to
3 continue to help support Israel, which we do need. I am a
4 firm believer that if it were not for Israel, anti-Semitism
5 would be much greater.

6 WOMAN: Absolutely. Absolutely.

7 MAN: Much greater and more pronounced.

8 So we are on a campaign to put our best foot for-
9 ward and try to put it in a proper perspective. The Jew is
10 not an underdog and should not be continually an underdog.
11 And he should not also be considered a money-grabber or a
12 money-maker, because the opportunities are in this country
13 for anybody and everybody.

14 WOMAN: This is a great country.

15 Q I love it too.

16 WOMAN: I have never doubted it. O. K.? This is a
17 great country, and we love it here. We have been here over
18 30 years. I can't even believe it. We have raised our--

19 MAN: The time flies.

20 WOMAN: Time flies very fast.

21 MAN: We have traveled. We see-- In fact, we went
22 through Boston, and we made our way through Boston, Cape
23 Cod, down through the Atlantic Coast, all the way into
24 Washington, D. C., rather than just fly in.

25 Q Uh-huh.

1 MAN: So we're taking a little bit of a vacation at the
2 same time we're participating in this event.

3 WOMAN: We've been to Israel for the Holocaust reunion.

4 Q Oh, you did?

5 WOMAN: Yes.

6 Q Lonnie Silver, whom I'm doing this for, was there
7 also, interviewing people.

8 I want to thank you for this interview.--I think
9 the tape might be running out.--

10 MAN: O. K.

11 Q --and say that it has been a privilege.

12 WOMAN: O. K. Thank you.

13 MAN: Thank you. Do you have a business card?

14 Q I'm-- Let's see. Let's stop.

15 * * * *

16

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18

19 CONTINUING INTERVIEW OF WOMAN, MIDWAY THROUGH TAPE 59, PART
20 II, Side 2.

21

22 Q You were saying that it's too hard for you to tell
23 your story?

24 (By a woman's voice)

25 A/ Well, I wanted to say, 'tis too hard. It hurts too
much to talk about it.

26

 But one thing what bothers me so much, some people

27