

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Edith Zierer
June 12, 2003
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English translation

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English translation of Hebrew transcript

Tape One

N.B.: Hello. C... can you please say uh... your name?

E.Z.: Uh... my name is Edith Zierer, and also, back then in '46 I was Edith Zierer, because I married a distant relative and... that's it.

N.B.: You were born where?

E.Z.: In... I was born in Katowice, Poland, in Silesia, and...

N.B.: When?

E.Z.: June 28, 1931.

N.B.: You know, umm... this interview is being conducted [coughs] conducted on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, uh... following... excuse me for one second... [Talks to the cameraman] As I was telling you, this interview is being conducted on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. Umm... they uh... have acquired an interview that you gave in '46, if I'm not mistaken, in France (E.Z.: Yes) in... an orphanage, a children's shelter in France (E.Z.: [they got it] from my children) to uh... Boder, right?

E.Z.: Right.

N.B.: To Boder. Umm... and this is a sort of attempt umm... to see, compared to that interview, how things seem to you today. Do you remember the Boder interview?

E.Z.: Yes. I remember I was the only one who... who could communicate with him. Uh... all the children spoke either Yiddish or Polish, and he spoke English and German and... French but back then I didn't speak French yet, but I knew German from home, and... so the principal sent me to the room where he was sitting, and I didn't... didn't realize he had a tape at all, I talked, and I told him, and after uh... a while, after uh... after my interview, that is, then, '46, in the children's shelter, he let me hear the uh... the cassette. (N.B.: On the spot?) I was surprised. Yes. Yes. I was very surprised, and that's it, I forgot about it, really, and... here, in the year 2000, there was the meeting with the Pope, which was reported around the world, and then I suddenly received uh... a letter, from Washington, from the Holocaust Museum, and they asked me whether I was the same Edith Zierer that Prof. Boder had uh... had an interview with in '46, so I called you up and said yes, uh... they said, "We have a cassette here". So I asked for the cassette, and they, after a while, sent it, and it was very moving. That's it.

N.B.: Did you recognize yourself?

E.Z.: Uh.. by.. by voice? (N.B.: Yes) its... it's a cassette without a visual, it's only ah... (N.B.: Yes, yes, only sound) yes, yes, yes.

N.B.: Did you recognize your voice?

E.Z.: Yes. Yes. It was exact... and that's it. And then you started to work on that...

N.B.: And how was it, to suddenly hear your voice when you were fif... fifteen (E.Z.: Uh...), right?

E.Z.: Excuse me?

N.B.: you fif.. w.. were fifteen.

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: How was it, to hear your voice in...

E.Z.: Uh... it was strange, my German, I Uh... Uh... my German was strange, Uh... even today it is a lot better, though I haven't spoken it in a pretty long time, and... it... it was very moving, to hear myself uh... so many years back, it uh... yes. And also, l... my children and grandchildren were also very moved. "Grandma, how come, in '46 you already gave an interview?" I was chosen for it, so I gave an interview, yes.

N.B.: Tell me, and when you heard the interview, did you connect with everything you heard? Did you remember everything?

E.Z.: Yes, yes, yes. I remember, yes, I really have a memory of... uh... I remember every little detail, even in much more complicated things than that, and... I remember everything. I hope I'll keep that up [laughs]. Yes. I remember everything. Exactly.

N.B.: And the interview was in German?

E.Z.: The interview was in German.

N.B.: Your... your... sons, your children, the family understands German?

E.Z.: Yes. Yes. My husband is from Austria, Vienna, uh... so at home, at first, until I learned to speak Hebrew, and... we spoke German, the children understand, they don't have full command of the language, but they understand almost everything.

N.B.: In what condition were you then, when Boder interviewed you? How do you remember yourself?

E.Z.: First of all, I was already very sick. I was very sick. Afterwards the illness broke out, a very short time after that interview, the illness broke out, uh... I had severe tuberculosis of the bones. Uh... and really uh... the interview was in September... in November I was already in the Rothschild hospital in Paris, for the first operation, and

then a second and a third, uh... and afterwards I actually didn't return home to the children's shelter, but was sent to southern France, to the Pyrenees, on the border of Spain.

N.B.: We'll get to... to... (E.Z.: Yes, so that's that) to that story, I'm just asking, back then, when you gave the interview, did you already... you already Felt unwell back then? Uh...

E.Z.: Felt what?

N.B.: Unwell?

E.Z.: Uh... Yes. I had a Fever all the time, and until they found out that it was tuberculosis, I uh... I was already a little secluded from home, and I didn't go back home, but went to the sanatorium in the Pyrenees, and...

N.B.: While Boder was interviewing you (E.Z.: Yes?), if you can remember, did you Feel that he uh... understood what you were telling him?

E.Z.: Uh... Yes. Yes, he was very humane, very understanding, uh... and you could see that this was a man... a professional. His questions were to the point, uh... and... and I really answered about everything I remembered, yes? Uh... not little things, I didn't really go into detail about what happened to me, but... I briefly summarized what... I went through into a tape cassette.

N.B.: Did you summarize, or did he?

E.Z.: No, I did. I made it uh... concise... concise and... and that's all, and he was content with that. I suppose he had experience with other children, who found it very difficult to talk about this, and I spoke freely, and... he didn't ask me... that is, he asked some questions, but only a Few, so that I was speaking uh... freely.

N.B.: When you say uh... that he may had had experience with other children, compared to the experience he had with you (E.Z.: Yes), is it... did you Feel this, when you were talking, in the children's... shelter?

E.Z.: No he did not... not... not... not interview any other children in the shelter.

N.B.: Oh, in that shelter he interviewed (E.Z.: No, no, no, no) only you? Because he also interviewed someone named Ferber, do you remember? A gymnastics teacher named Ferber?

E.Z.: Yes, yes, yes, yes. Joseph Ferber. Right. Right, I remember him. He's not with us anymore. Is there a cassette of his interview too? I...

N.B.: Uh... I imagine there should be, I (E.Z.: Yes) got a copy of it (E.Z.: Ah). Just as I have a copy of your (E.Z.: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes) interview with Boder, I have here a copy of Ferber's interview. Are you interested?

E.Z.: Yes, very.

N.B.: I can show it to you.

E.Z.: I have... his wife is still alive, and his nephew, uh... is also alive, and it would really be very heartwarming to give it... to present it to them.

N.B.: Then I will try to help (E.Z.: Yes) with that. Have you been in touch with him over the years? With Ferber?

E.Z.: Yes. Yes, yes. In th... quite close touch. Wonderful man, who went through the war in Russia, was a... senior officer, and it was him who taught us uh... the Morse code, and all sorts of interesting things, yes, you're right. He was an instructor, instructor he was, uh... very, very uh... efficient at that time. Yes. And I kept in especially close touch with him and even had a picture of him, yes.

N.B.: And... uh... did you keep in touch with others uh... who were with you in the shelter?

E.Z.: Yes, I'm very close to them, I uh... after L... I don't know if you know this, but I... Lena Kichler, the shelter's principal, I'm filling in for her today. That is, I gather everybody up, uh... and we arrange get-togethers in... two years ago, we had a get-together in Kvutsat Schiller [a kibbutz], I located all the children abroad, and they came to the get-together, uh... and I found all kinds of interesting things in her estate, and... yes. And we made a film, in the year uh... o... t... 2001, four w... who were children back then, we went to Poland, uh... to Zakopane, where the shelter used to be, and... we filmed it, and then we filmed the shelter in France. We located that one as well after so many years. And I think that at... the Cinematheque in Jerusalem, next month, uh... we'll watch it.

N.B.: Yes. How many... how many children of the original group still keep in touch?

E.Z.: 40-42. Yes.

N.B.: Meaning an annual get-together, or...

E.Z.: Uh... we had a get-together, uh... we had a get-together in October, uh... two years ago, and... I keep in contact with them, I mean, every holiday, we all call each other, it's a family. We have no other family, I mean, we were orphaned, and while Lena was alive, for fifteen years, uh... she'd have a meeting in her house in Givataym, on Passover, and we'd come, uh...there, with our grandchildren, and she was really a mother to us, and when she passed away I said that... in... also in an interview, to Yediot Aharonot or something, that was actually the first time I had been orphaned, because back then, when we were all orphans, and it was a kind of global thing, then uh... we didn't Feel so much that we lost our parents, I mean, we were all in the same situation. But here, when Lena passed away, I was broken. Broken.

N.B.: So for you, the interview with Boder was actually uh... the first time that someone (E.Z.: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes) inquired about what had happened, what you went through during the war?

E.Z.: Uh... it was the first time, tough there was the Red Cross, uh... who would come uh... and register the children, and... really, I've gotten a copy recently, uh... and... but like this, in such a personal way, yes. Lena was also interested in the kids, but she didn't have an interview with me, for some reason there isn't an interview with me, because I had started writing a diary.

N.B.: When?

E.Z.: Um...the moment I got to Zakopane, every day. I have a diary that... day after day, our entire journey, uh... from Zakopane through Czechia, Prague, uh... to France, uh... then in France, then in the Rothschild hospital, then in the Pyrenees, a truly daily diary.

N.B.: Do you have it?

E.Z.: I have it. And Lena used... (N.B.: Did Lena read it?) excuse me?

N.B.: Did Lena read this diary?

E.Z.: She didn't read it, I didn't let her, because there were things there which were uh... a little intimate, things a little uh... but I gave her many outlines, uh... she wrote three books and... there are many things from my diary in them. Yes. And... that's it, with him it was really the first interview, which is the first time. And I forgot, I forgot about it, and I was really surprised, when I got the cassette.

N.B.: Well, then, uh... with your permission I will try to follow the path of that interview (E.Z.: Yes), uh... and... go with you through what happened to you during the war. But if possible, uh... uh... uh... a few words about the time before the war.

E.Z.: Uh... a rich bourgeois uh... home, with a German nanny for the children, and... [Cough]

N.B.: What was her name?

E.Z.: Fralane Kate. Yes. Who took care of us...

N.B.: Who is "us"?

E.Z.: E.Z.: Uh... my sister uh... I had a younger sister.

N.B.: Her name?

E.Z.: Judith. The current name of my daughter. Uh... a happy... beautiful childhood, in a beautiful city, with wealthy parents, we wanted for nothing, I started going to school, uh... 1st grade, 2nd grade, and I went, there was evening school, uh... I also studied there, that's it, and... we went on a vacation, in '39...

N.B.: But excuse me, when you say a happy childhood, and... what do you mean? What is a happy childhood?

E.Z.: With no problems, with... with uh... I studied ballet, what... what a girl... I studied ballet, and... I learned to play the piano, that is, I was just starting, uh... and... everything a child uh... a child uh... needs that, great vacations, a beautiful and well-kept house, I don't know, uh...

N.B.: What was your mother's name?

E.Z.: Salomea. Sally.

N.B.: And where was she from?

E.Z.: She came... she was born in Wieliczka, uh... and father was also from Silesia, not far from there, from Dziedgze.

N.B.: Did you know your grandparents (E.Z.: Yes, yes, yes) from either side?

E.Z.: A Grandfather who... a Grandfather who passed away... my grandfather on my mother's side, who was a rabbi, of a very progressive sort, who spoke Polish, uh... which was unusual back then, a white bearded man, t... tall, blue eyed, uh... and he spoke excellent Polish, which was uncustomary among Jews who were uh... orthodox, who didn't speak uh... and mother went to high school in Krakow, uh... a Polish... uh... high school, which was also uncustomary, at that time, but uh... she had a beautiful voice, and she had been in a choir, so they accepted her to the choir there, and she had her baccalaureat by then. And in...

N.B.: So, the rabbi sent his daughter to a Polish high school.

E.Z.: Uh... she was chosen, and he didn't object.

N.B.: Um hum. She was chosen because of her voice?

E.Z.: Yes. Her voice and her talents as a student.

N.B.: Um hum.

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: And the grandmother, the rabbi's wife?

E.Z.: My Grandmother I didn't know (N.B.: You didn't know her?). My grandmother I didn't know, no.

N.B.: She passed away earlier?

E.Z.: Grandmother passed away at my mother's birth (N.B.: Um), and I didn't know her. And on the other side, a very nice grandfather and grandmother, whom I loved, with whom I spent... that also, a wonderful childhood, uh... at grandmother's house, a large, open house, and fields...

N.B.: Where?

N.Z.: In Dziedzge. That's Silesia, near Bielsko (N.B.: Um hum). Uh.. and... a wonderful childhood.

N.B.: What did your grandfather do?

E.Z.: Grandfather um... he expo... that is, he dealt... he had fields of special grass, grass for mattresses, it's... it was called Rosshair, and it went for export, uh... the train would stand with the carts just next to the house, train uh... train tracks, and they'd send it abroad. Uh... these square bundles of this stuff, and that... that was his occupation.

N.B.: He was a businessman?

N.Z.: A big, rich, businessman.

N.B.: What... what was his name?

E.Z.: Uh... David Zierer.

N.B.: And uh... the grandmother, what was her name?

E.Z.: Charlotta Zierer, yes.

N.B.: Charlotta is... it's a gentile name, Charlotta.

E.Z.: Yes, she... grandmother gave all the... grandma had six uh... grandchildren in the Zierer family, and she chose the names for all the girls, and they were all gentile names. There were Herta, Rita, Renata, Edith, Judith my sister, Stella and Mellita, no... none of these names were Jewish. There wasn't...

N.B.: Judith is a Jewish name.

E.Z.: Names which were uh... used by gentiles at the time. And she was a devout woman, but devout in a... nice way, yes? Not... how to put it, she wore no wig on the head, and no... uh... put it this way, a very progressive woman.

N.B.: And how uh... were things at your house, concerning religion?

E.Z.: Also, just tradition. Just tradition. No... we had uh... we lit candles on the Shabbath, but not... not... not... we celebrated the holidays, but not beyond that. Father had a seat at the synagogue, second row, which cost a lot of money, and he'd go there only at holidays, not regularly.

N.B.: What did he do, your father?

E.Z.: Father had a large um... store, selling leather, carpets. The store had two floors and a basement uh... it was in a central location, uh... sold leather, uh... everything that had to do with leather, carpets, uh... curtains, that sort of things. One of the largest stores in... Katowice.

N.B.: Well, he was a businessman as well.

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: Like your grandfather.

E.Z.: Yes. Yes. In a different way but also very... wealthy. That's it. All of that, I have lost.

N.B.: Was there any [coughs], outlook on Zionism at home?

E.Z.: That's the thing, I... often uh... Felt angry with father in... my heart, for that when I was um... went to the Beitar Movement, which I sympathized with, because they didn't receive me with candy there, like in other youth movements. Being a seven or eight year old girl, nobody even looked my way there, and I liked that, and I thought I must infiltrate it... and that's it, I went with the Tel Hay charity box, collecting money, and father was very angry with me. So, I realized he was an anti-Zionist.

N.B.: Did you talk about it, or was it...

E.Z.: Um... no... I didn't talk to him about it, because... I didn't talk to him about it, but I understood that he was against it. And later, during the war uh... I don't know if I should skip to that now...

N.B.: Well, since you've started (E.Z.: Yes?), say a Few words.

E.Z.: During the war, when we escaped to... Russia, that is, escaped eastwards, and got to Lwow, we could have gotten to... that is, we were nearly sent to... to... to Kerch on the shores of the Black Sea, and they told us, if you get there, you can go to Israel, then father said no, we're going back to Germany. So, he didn't... for some reason he didn't want to, and it was '40 or '41 already, didn't... didn't want to go to Israel, and I uh... was very mad at him, very mad at him, later, because we could actually all have stayed alive, had we stayed in Russia, and here was I left all alone. This has greatly pained me all through the years, uh... that father didn't understand at the time the necessity of uh... escaping and going to Israel.

N.B.: And as a child at home, in Katowice, right?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: As a child at home, when he let it be known that he wasn't favorable... wasn't favorable of your activity in Beitar...

E.Z.: Hebrew... I learn very... have learned languages very easily, so I chose to go study Hebrew and... then he didn't object, another language, and another, alright, but uh... regarding uh... going to a [Zionist] movement, that he objected to.

N.B.: And did he keep you from going?

E.Z.: I evaded him [laughs], I escaped.

N.B.: And you went anyway?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: Seven years old?

E.Z.: Eight, yes.

N.B.: What did the movement give you, an eight-year-old?

E.Z.: Um... we learned some Palestineography, about the Land of Israel, uh... all kinds of places, uh... Jabotinsky, what I could understand back then, yes, and he actually visited Katowice, and... uh... I really, really wanted to get to Israel.

N.B.: Where did you get that?

E.Z.: I don't know. Don't know. It appealed to me, it appealed to me even then, and... I heard that Jabotinsky said in one of his speeches, uh... that there was going to be annihilation, and then... a little later, when I was 10, I understood, understood that... that it was happening, mother was gone by then, and... we'd made a big mistake. I mean, there was little that I, as a child, could do, but...

N.B.: But you understood?

E.Z.: But I understood, yes.

N.B.: Did you tell anyone?

E.Z.: Excuse me?

N.B.: Did you tell anyone?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: Who?

E.Z.: [I talked...] to mother and father. I said, if we'd gone to Israel, which I knew, Haifa, Nahalal, Tel Aviv, I knew the cities, uh... and... we could have been a happy family today, instead of uh... wandering like this, we had no place to live, and it was a hard winter of for... minus forty degrees Centigrade, and we had no clothes, I really suffered. We lived from one day to the next, yes?

N.B.: Where was it like this?

E.Z.: In Lemberg.

N.B.: In Lemberg. Well, we'll get to Lemberg. Anyway, that's where you told them.

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: And what did they say to you?

E.Z.: Mother didn't... didn't... mother didn't say anything, but she uh... she explained to me that... that I was right in a way, but it's not... it's not... it was unheard of for people to emigrate out of Poland in an organized way. Leave the c... comfort and plenty, yes? The... the wealth and all, and go, leave everything and come to Israel.

N.B.: So, when you were refugees, actually, in Lemberg (E.Z.: Yes), you were still thinking of the comfort and plenty back in Poland?

E.Z.: Yes. Father already felt that... something was happening, but ah... didn't... didn't... come uh... far enough, that is, to turn himself completely and become a Zionist, yes? Big mistake.

N.B.: Well, let's try to be a little more orderly, uh... you were telling about your home life (E.Z.: Yes) um...

E.Z.: Then in '39 we came back from vacation and father said, the Germans are... three kilometers away, it's... a town on the border of Germany, Katowice. And... father said, go to Krakow, it's 60 Kilometers away, and I'll get there. So we went...

N.B.: How did you travel?

E.Z.: I think father took us. We had a car, a Chevrolet, father took us, and we lived in a hotel, uh... which belonged to... my mother's uncle, in Krakow.

N.B.: Who went? You, your mother and your sister?

E.Z.: Yes. And my aunt joined us as well, with her two children, her husband was already in Brazil by then. Yes (N.B.: That aunt was your mother's sister?). Mother's sister, with two children, a boy and a girl.

N.B.: And what was her name, that aunt?

E.Z.: Aunt Frieda. And the children uh... Ziggy and Amalia. And we went together in the car with them, father w... d... got to Krakow, we went with the car, it was quite a big Chevrolet, no... without... without much baggage, one small suitcase each, for... a Few days, uh... and... we went, maybe some 250 kilometers...

N.B.: Wait, first you said that father brought you to Krakow (E.Z.: Yes, it's uh...) so you'd stayed there, and he went back to Katowice.

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: And then the war broke out?

E.Z.: Then the war broke out and he arrived.

N.B.: How many days was it?

E.Z.: It was a Few days. And... when the first shell Fell in Krakow, father realized we had to flee from Krakow. So we started going, together with the Polish army. And... after 250 kilometers, 250 kilometers, he needed fuel, but all the fuel was reserved for the Polish army, and he understood that he can't get any, so some Polish officer said, "give us the car, and you'll get a wagon and two horses." So we did. And he chose for us two horses and... uh... a wagon... a pile of planks, really, and together with the army we chased... ran away from the Germans. Until we arrived at the Romanian border, where they let the army uh... enter, but not uh... private persons. And then uh... we stayed in the area, that is, we went around and got to... to... Lwow. It was Rosh Hashana [Jewish New Year] Eve '39.

N.B.: How long did it take you to get from Krakow to Lwow?

E.Z.: Um... not... not long. We just ran, yes? Being... chased, and...

N.B.: But it still takes a Few days (E.Z.: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes) on a horse and wagon.

E.Z.: It took, I think, a week, ten days, no... no more.

N.B.: And how did you make for yourself on the way?

E.Z.: It was very hard. Each time I went into... mother would send me, I was the child who knew how to get along, to peasants, to buy uh... eggs, bread, and so. Not a problem (N.B.: You mean, to buy with money). Excuse me?

N.B.: To buy with money. There was money.

E.Z.: Yes, yes, yes. There was still money.

N.B.: So why did they have to send you?

E.Z.: Don't know, mother would tell me, go over there, g... don't know, I uh... could get along, I guess. My sister cried all the time, my cousins were also sad, it was uncomfortable for them, no, it's, we didn't sleep in beds. It was all in the wagon, with a little uh... uh... how is that called... uh...

N.B.: Straw?

E.Z.: No, there was wheat, the... the... ear.

N.B.: Chaff, chaff, chaff.

E.Z.: Chaff, exactly. We slept on that, and sometimes some... we slept at some... at some peasant's house, bathed a little, that's it. We lived in the wagon.

N.B.: And... And during those days, how do you remember uh... father and mother, they...

E.Z.: Who?

N.B.: Your father and mother.

E.Z.: Um... father was very sad, mother was a little more optimistic, uh... that we'd get somewhere, that's it, we weren't the only ones, there were a lot of people, uh... in this mass flight, so we thought we'd get somewhere, and we got to Lwow, and... mother went again, because she had a very Arian look, she was very beautiful, she got an apartment which belonged to some Polish princess, at her home, she didn't know they were Jewish, later she was pleased, that it was Jews and not the Russian army who had her apartment, and there we lived.

N.B.: For rent? Did you rent the apartment?

E.Z.: Yes, yes, yes. Not an apartment, a room with a bathroom. We were all in one room (N.B.: Where, in...), a big room.

N.B.: Yes. Where in Lwow, do you remember?

E.Z.: In Lwow.

N.B.: Where?

E.Z.: 3 Badeni street. Next to the uh... Polytechnicum. It was really an expensive area. That's it. So we lived there uh... until '41, until uh... Barbarossa, the war between Russia...

N.B.: Just a minute, but that's a very long time, you got to Lwow in '39.

E.Z.: '39.

N.B.: It was many months until '41 came, what... how did... (All inside the apartment) how did you live?

E.Z.: Uh... we stood in line, that is, again, I stood in line for uh... sugar, I stood in line for bread (N.B.: With money?), Yes. Yes.

N.B.: There was still money?

E.Z.: There was still money. There was still money, uh... and... that's it, actually, little... little... little... changed there during that time, uh... there's this story that... I must tell, because... because that helped us a lot. One day, in the winter of '39-'40, uh... it was snowing, I went out, I had a flowerpot on the balcony in that apartment, I went over, I wanted to take the flowerpot uh... into the room, because I was afraid the... would uh... freeze to death, and it slipped from my hands. Just slipped. Suddenly they said a... a Few minutes later, there appeared uh... two Russian soldiers, and said: "Who threw something?" Nobody had thrown anything. So... so I,

with such honesty, said, I uh... I picked my flowerpot up and it... slipped from my hands and fell. It had fallen on an officer. Cracked his head. The police took me... that is, these two people took me, to the hospital, to this man, he was already completely covered with uh... bandages, and I told him, I didn't do anything on purpose, I just uh... it slipped. It turned out that this was a medical officer, a Russian, a Jew, with whom I kept in touch later, he asked me to come and visit him every day, at the hospital, and after he recovered he came to our house, coincidentally it was a Friday, and he saw mother lighting the candles, and he said, I want to support you, I want to help you. I collected stamps, so he would give me stamps, now, one day what does he tell me, "Editha, I can help you, but I need... I need something in return. So uh... what can I give you, what... there is a crate of luxury Polish cigarettes, but I need to pay for it somehow, uh... I can't just..."

N.B.: What do you mean by "There is a crate"?"

E.Z.: There's... he was... he was responsible for the warehouses there, I don't... I don't know.

N.B.: He had a crate of cigarettes?

E.Z.: A crate of cigarettes, one thousand cigarettes, uh and... I came to father, no... uh... not even ten years old, I told him: "Father, give him the watch", he'll give us the watch back, I'll sell the cigarettes. And so it was. Father looked at me, ga... he had a Schaffhausen, all gold, gave me the watch, and I, a little girl, brought it to this officer, and he gave me, that is, they brought to my home a crate of cigarettes, ten uh... cigarettes in each pack. And there was a... famous cafe, Cafe de la Paix, in Lwow, where all the refugees would go, and I'd sell the cigarettes there one by one. And when I had sold some twenty packs, he said, "I'm giving you back the w..." I mean, I gave him the money and he gave me the watch back.

Tape Two

N.B.: Edith, uh... (E.Z.: Yes?) I wanted to take advantage of the break that has just been forced on us to explore the background of the story you are telling right now. You say that you met, by accident, through the flowerpot that fell on his head (E.Z.: Yes), you met a... medical officer (E.Z.: A Russian doctor) in the Russian army, a Jew (E.Z.: Yes), right? Who uh... wanted to help you.

E.Z.: Yes, after... later when he...

N.B.: Why... why... why was there a need for help? Wasn't there... did you run out of money? What happened?

E.Z.: No, he... he asked me how things at home were, whether we had anything to eat, and I said, very, very, very little.

N.B.: Oh... you didn't say anything about that, was there... was there...

E.Z.: But... every day I would... he asked that I come to the hospital every day.

N.B.: But before that, was there a shortage of food?

E.Z.: Yes, of course. We had nothing. We'd stand in line for everything. For every little thing you had to stand in line and there wasn't enough, and we weren't locals, so we didn't know where we could buy, where we could find a peasant to buy from and get supplies, we were uh... new to town, and didn't... didn't know our way around, so that...

N.B.: Was there anyone you made contact with?

Interruption

N.B.: When you were in Lwow, did you make contact with any local person of the Jewish community, with anybody?

E.Z.: No, not from what remember, maybe my parents, I don't know, no.

N.B.: Were you very lonely?

E.Z.: Yes. [noise] There were acquaintances who arrived from Krakow, and there were people who came from Katowice, we talked, sometimes at night uh... we'd play cards, because there wasn't a... there wasn't anything else to do, from 7 PM to 7 AM it was forbidden to walk the streets, so people would come over and stay for the night in that room. We'd play cards, and mother would cook something, that was our fun.

N.B.: And what would you do?

E.Z.: I'd sell more cigarettes...

N.B.: No, no, that came later, you hadn't yet... hadn't yet met that officer (E.Z.: Oh).

E.Z.: But it was right at the beginning, it was in '40. That's right at the start. Uh... I went to school, and at school they said we had to pray to Papushka [Daddy] Stalin. And I didn't want to, but those who would pray would get a bun and a glass of warm milk. I came home, and told mother that I was not going to school and would not pray. Afterwards I thought about it, why not, I'll say my *Shema Israel* in my heart, and out loud I'll pray to Papushka Stalin, and so I'd walk half an hour to school and get my bun and glass of warm milk.

N.B.: What prayer would they offer to Papushka Stalin?

E.Z.: Excuse me? Uh... a prayer in Russian, I don't know, uh... out loud, we repeated after the teacher, that I don't remember, but it was a prayer uh... for Stalin's health, and... The Great Father... something like that.

N.B.: You learned Russian?

E.Z.: Yes. But I don't re... I understand it because of my Polish, but I don't... I don't know the ABC anymore, and don't... don't...

N.B.: But back then you could get along in Russian?

E.Z.: Yes, yes. Yes.

N.B.: And with that Jewish officer (E.Z.: Also) on whose head (E.Z.: By acci...) you dropped a flowerpot...

E.Z.: We talked in Russian.

N.B.: Russian?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: You knew Yiddish?

E.Z.: Uh... no. I spoke German. Yiddish I didn't learn at home. But today I understand Yiddish, because... Hebrew and German together is... is Yiddish. Uh... yes.

N.B.: Yes. So uh... you kept going to that school?

E.Z.: Yes. During the whole time that you were in... in... (E.Z.: Yes) in Lwow, in Lemberg?

E.Z.: Yes. Yes.

N.B.: And your sister?

E.Z.: No. My sister never came out of the house, she was sickly, and... there weren't enough clothes for everybody, I took my cousin's clothes, warm pants and all...

N.B.: Ziggy's?

E.Z.: Ziggy's. And his hat, this ski hat, and I was almost the only one of us to walk the streets. No one had... had clothes for minus forty degrees Centigrade. So I stood in lines, I went to school, and later I went... I went to sell the uh... cigarettes.

N.B.: Now, when you stood in line, was it for food?

E.Z.: Sugar.

N.B.: You remember a line for sugar?

E.Z.: I remember a line for sugar.

N.B.: And bread?

E.Z.: Bread also. In the line for sugar it... I'd do like this, I would come, there were ten people, and I'd cry that I'm cold and I'm just a little girl, so they'd say, go home, we'll keep your place for you. I wouldn't go home, I'd move another ten people forward up the line, do the same, I had three places reserved in the same line this way. I'd get the sugar, and I'd put it into my sleeve, sugar cubes, into my sleeve, and I'd go to stand in line again, with the sugar, and put it into my other sleeve, and the third time, in my hat. I got home, and I started taking the sugar out of my sleeves, and all that, yes...

N.B.: And you did this regularly? Each time you'd arrange yourself three turns?

E.Z.: Yes, for bread also.

N.B.: Where did you hide the bread?

E.Z.: Inside this... I had a garment (N.B.: Um hum), inside the garment. We'd get it without any bag, nothing, they'd just pour it.

N.B.: Wait a minute, was it for money, paid for, or...

E.Z.: Yes, uh... I... no. Tell the truth, I can't remember, I think so. No, no. No payment. No payment, they'd... No, no payment.

N.B.: You had coupons?

E.Z.: Nothing. There was... there would arrive... arrive a shipment of sugar, and people would stand in line, no, I don't think I paid for it, don't think so, don't think so.

N.B.: And they didn't notice that you got three rations?

E.Z.: Evidently no. But when I came home my nose was frozen, for... having stood in line all night. Yes.

N.B.: You actually had quite a responsibility...

E.Z.: A responsibility, and I held it willingly, it's not that I didn't want to do it, mother said go, stand in line, and I went. I got into that garment and went like that.

N.B.: And they relied on you?

E.Z.: They relied on me. A lot. A lot. I really don't know why, but that's how it was.

N.B.: Were there other errands that you had to go on?

E.Z.: Uh... later I sold cigarettes, father couldn't go out, neither could mother, because they'd catch Jews, send them to distant uh... work, and...

N.B.: But we're talking about the Soviet era.

E.Z.: Soviets, Soviets, Soviets, I'm talking about the Soviets, it wasn't under German rule at all, just... just the Soviets, The Soviets also treated people uh... very cruelly, maybe it's not widely known but... but it's true.

N.B.: Father said that he didn't go out because he...

E.Z.: No, we didn't let father out, we were afraid for him. Yes.

N.B.: And mother too?

E.Z.: Mother too. Mother would go out from time to time, but also not often. Again, mother was very beautiful, so we were afraid uh... some Russ... Russian soldier would get her, that sort of stuff. I was the only one uh... the foreign minister. Yes (N.B.: And...) and...

N.B.: And how did it feel to be the one who... carried all that on her shoulders?

E.Z.: It felt... it felt I had the responsibility, and... I did it willingly. I never complained. I never complained. I was proud of it even.

N.B.: Nine uh... how old were you? Nine?

E.Z.: Um... in '40 I was nine, I was, yes.

N.B.: And then you met with that officer?

E.Z.: Yes, I met with that officer, and...

N.B.: And he actually offered uh... that you'd work with him, some deal? You'll sell cigarettes...

E.Z.: A deal to help me, to help us. He saw our situation, he was to our house and saw the situation, and...

N.B.: What was the situation?

E.Z.: Mother was making a cake out of corn flour, yes, that was for the Shabbath, and some soup, and that's it, there was no... there was no meat, no nothing. So...

N.B.: But father still had money? Uh...

N.Z.: Sorry? Father? He still had a little money, probably, yes. That... I can't say, but I suppose he did. But there was nothing to buy, anyway. And they... who didn't come out then, they didn't have any contact with other people, really it... the situation was very, very... I didn't feel it as much, because I would go out, and didn't feel as much what my parents felt, the suffering from being imprisoned in the house, and my sister and cousins as well, but ah... that was the situation, and afterwards it happened that my aunt...

N.B.: Wait, and now the cigarettes.

E.Z.: Oh the cigarettes. So I sold the cigarettes.

N.B.: How did you sell cigarettes?

E.Z.: I took uh... some ten packs, and sold single cigarettes, not packs.

N.B.: To whom?

E.Z.: To the people at the Cafe de la Paix.

N.B.: You went around and offered them?

E.Z.: Yes. They would wait for me, every day they waited for me...

N.B.: They knew you?

E.Z.: Yes. There are people today who remember that. Who... were in Russia and came back and remember it. Uh... and... I wouldn't sell two to the same person (N.B.: Why?), just one.

N.B.: Why?

E.Z.: Because. Because I took a pretty big sum, and I said, tomorrow I'll come again.

N.B.: Do you remember which cigarettes they were?

E.Z.: Yes, Extra Plaskie.

N.B.: Where were they made?

E.Z.: It was uh... Egyptian... Egyptian tobacco, very delicate uh... very expensive.

N.B.: You knew that back then?

E.Z.: No... Not that... I even started smoking. I started smoking.

N.B.: You smoked those cigarettes?

E.Z.: Yes, yes. I had no chocolate, no nothing, and father got very angry with me, and he said, this is only for men, and I saw women smoking as well, but I stopped very quickly.

N.B.: Did it make you cough?

E.Z.: Sorry?

N.B.: Did smoking make you cough?

E.Z.: I don't... don't remember [laughs]. Don't remember. But I only smoked a few cigarettes, I smoked, I remember...

N.B.: So now let's t... try to see how your daily schedule went, uh... when did you leave home with the cigarettes?

E.Z.: Uh... at noon, when people would uh... at noon. Deep snow, snow, I went on a sleigh, to the cafe, where...

N.B.: What do you mean, a sleigh with... with a horse?

E.Z.: No, no, uh... Zenki, uh... for kids.

N.B.: Skates. OK.

E.Z.: Yes, and I'd get there, and people would stand and... wait for me, and that's it, I sold some twenty packs...

N.B.: How much did you take for a cigarette?

E.Z.: A lot of money. A lot of money.

N.B.: How much?

E.Z.: I think uh... half a Ruble or something like that. Not Kopeiki, just Rubles. And that was a lot of money, and people paid me, no one complained about the price, no one... they would actually wait for me there, and... that's it, and when I had sold a small portion of the cigarettes, I was able, I had enough money, I came to that officer, gave him the money and he gave me the watch back. So, I had many cigarettes left to sell, and that really uh... helped us. We had money to uh... buy all sorts of things later.

N.B.: From that I gather that father didn't have too much money, if you needed the cigarette money.

E.Z.: Sorry?

N.B.: If you needed the cigarette money...

E.Z.: Yes, yes, we needed it, he did not... not... not... have money, it improved our situation. Put it like that. Yes. And... afterwards, my aunt... my uncle, my mother's sister's husband, he tried, went... to Brazil, in '39. There was a fair in Sao Paolo, and he went, he wanted to emigrate, and he didn't come back, and afterwards, during the war, he wrote uh... that he could uh... bring her to Brazil, but only from Germany, not from Russia. And my aunt, with her daughter, my cousin, a blue eyed blonde, crossed the border, back to... the General Gouvernement, it was, and the [male] cousin remained with us, a green eyed blonde, but circumcised. [Because of] that they were afraid.

N.B.: You knew that already back then?

E.Z.: Sorry?

N.B.: Did they speak about it in front of you, saying that he had to stay because...

E.Z.: Yes, it was, he... they said that it was dangerous for him to cross the border, because he could be caught. And she was already in Krakow, my aunt, with my...

N.B.: How did you keep in touch, how did you know that they arrived in Krakow?

E.Z.: Uh... through people, not through the... through people who arrived and... told us. And then my aunt wanted her son too. And there was an exchange in uh... '41, uh... in May, there was an exchange of Germans and... Russians, those who wanted to come... a reunification of families, shall we say, yes. And there was a great line in Lwow, and mother went, and wanted to have my cousin join... someone, some family, who would take him there, to his mother. So the officer uh... asked her, "why can't you go?" Mother was outstandingly beautiful, she was very, very pretty, and... then she said that... "I have a family here, he's just..." So he said, "the day after tomorrow, you come with all your family, and you can all go to... the General Gouvernement", and so it was.

N.B.: Wait a minute, this is something that you mother told you, that...

E.Z.: This is something that I know.

N.B.: She told you.

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: But you've just skipped over quite a long time in Lwow.

E.Z.: There is nothing... nothing ch... ch... changed, it was quite a... monotonous uh... period, uh... with no changes. Food, ch...

N.B.: Sc... school?

E.Z.: Yes, I had a lot... after a while I left school too, because I was busy with other things. Uh... selling cigarettes and stuff, I didn't go to school. It was useless to me, yes, so I had no patience for it, I read a lot of books, it... in the princess' library, it was a huge library, in Polish, I read uh... and... translations from French, lots of books. It... it was my pastime.

N.B.: In Russian?

E.Z.: No, in Polish.

N.B.: In Polish. Was she Polish, this princess?

E.Z.: Yes, yes. Harbina Dzieduszycka.

N.B.: Did you meet her?

E.Z.: Uh... by coincidence, I met her son, here in Israel, at Ein Hod. Well, but that's another story.

N.B.: But there was that incident when you went to the Black Sea.

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: How did it suddenly come about that you went to the Black Sea?

E.Z.: No, we were sent there.

N.B.: Who sent you?

E.Z.: The Russians.

N.B.: Why?

E.Z.: We were exiled.

N.B.: Why?

E.Z.: They took... not only us, other, other people too, and we came back, father must've paid a lot of money for it, we came back to Lwow.

N.B.: You were deported?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: How, how was it done?

E.Z.: They put us in cars, and after that on a train, and... we got to Kerch, on the shores of the Black Sea.

N.B.: How long did you travel?

E.Z.: Quite a long time. Quite a long time, I don't know, several days. We s... the train stopped and that was it. And... we returned on...

N.B.: What did they tell you? Why were you being deported?

E.Z.: Not... to work, there is work there, and there is... uh... they scattered people. Some went to the Ural, some went to Siberia, we went to Kerch. But we came back, because father didn't want to stay.

N.B.: How did you come back?

E.Z.: Also on trains. To... the that same Harbina, that is...

N.B.: You were saying, Father probably paid a lot of money for that?

E.Z.: Yes, for the voyage back. The Russians paid for our voyage to Kerch, going back, uh... we had to pay every time. Yes.

N.B.: And you came back to Lwow?

E.Z.: We came back to Lwow, to the same apartment, and all, and then my aunt went to... to Poland, to Germany, to the General... to Krakow, and we stayed. And the day before...

N.B.: And then you told your parents that you should have gone on...

E.Z.: Yes. Yes, I cried, I wanted to stay there, the climate was good, it wasn't cold there, that's it. And... on June 19th, the war broke out on June 21st, '41...

N.B.: One second, before we move on. To...

E.Z.: Yes? Yes?

N.B.: How do you remember your family life in Lwow?

E.Z.: It was very hard, uh... it wasn't a life, it was a sort of vegetative state, it wasn't a life. You can't call that a life. There was one oven in the middle of the room, in the middle of... of our room's living room, there was an oven with a chimney, and there everything... laundry dried uh... terrible, terrible conditions. Mother really suffered, and... it's not... it was such a drastic change of living standards. From luxury to... to something like this. That's it. We didn't talk about that. No.

N.B.: What did you talk about?

E.Z.: I don't recall that we talked much at all, I, I was so busy, we didn't... didn't talk so much, we had no time for conversation. Really. To tell the truth.

N.B.: Time...

E.Z.: Everyone in the same room. Everyone in the same room, everybody would sleep in... beds, even three in one bed, uh... we had no time for arguments and housekeeping, I just remember that mother taught me how to uh... braid my hair by myself. That I remember, that... but otherwise there was no contact.

N.B.: You were each preoccupied with himself?

E.Z.: We were each preoccupied with himself, each was sad, and... I think I was the happiest, because I'd go out and have some action and all. Yes.

N.B.: And you felt that back then?

E.Z.: Yes. I didn't... didn't have a relationship with my parents like I used to have. And they also, I think they felt bad, seeing me having to take care of everything. Put it this way, yes? That they were burdening me with all that, but there was no choice. There was no choice. And the... I arrived in... June 19th, we all leave uh... Lwow, to the border, to Przemysl, where the San river was.

N.B.: How did you travel? How did you travel?

E.Z.: Uh... no, it was in c... in... we were taken there. The Germans took us, they paid for it, the Germans...

N.B.: The Germans took you? From Lwow to Przemysl?

E.Z.: The Germans, yes. They were... the Germans were the Commission, it was called an exchange Commission, yes? So they gave us cars uh... trucks.

N.B.: German trucks entered Russia.

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: And came to Lwow (E.Z.: Yes), to get you out.

E.Z.: Yes. Yes, because there were...

N.B.: With German drivers?

E.Z.: Sorry?

N.B.: With German drivers?

E.Z.: Yes, and we got to the border, and there again was uh... a kind of German uh... inspection, and they asked if we had anything uh... something... valuables, and mother and father and... everyone was silent, only I said that I had valuables, I had a

stamp album. Very beautiful. I collected stamps. So the German uh... called me up, took out a mono... monocle, one uh... a kind of glass for one eye, and tweezers, and he took my most beautiful stamps from... from my album. Really my... most important stamps. And he gave me the album back, and I threw it back at him. That's courage, uh... again I wonder, what... what... what... what got into me, I threw it at him, I said, "it's not worth anything for me anymore, you took everything", and mother and father stood there, they thought he was going to pull a gun and shoot. Shoot me. We passed the border and got to Krakow...

N.B.: Tell me, this album went all the way with you from your home?

E.Z.: Uh... from home, yes. Yes.

N.B.: From Katowice?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: That is (E.Z.: Yes, yes), you took it with you when father brought you to Krakow.

E.Z.: Yes, that was the thing... not dolls, not teddy bears, I had nothing, just my stam... my stam... I really loved stamps, and... it taught me a lot, I knew about the world, all the... yes.

N.B.: Was there anything else... anything except the album that you took with you?

E.Z.: No, nothing.

N.B.: That was your dearest possession.

E.Z.: Yes. And the thing which... which... which I loved, I never played with dolls or anything like that. So it really hurt me when he took them, and... I threw it at him.

N.B.: And he didn't do anything.

E.Z.: He didn't do anything, I think he liked my uh... courage, and he... in some way, so I think, was a very noble man, that was not a common soldier, yes?

N.B.: A noble robber.

E.Z.: [laughs] Yes. Really, you could see, uh... an aristocrat, like, I saw, tall and presentable and all, and... I don't know. The... the likes of me he'd never met before, my whole treasure, he took all my beautiful things, and... I threw it at him. That's it. And then we came...

N.B.: And then you came back into the General Gouvernement.

E.Z.: The General Gouvernement. We arrived in Krakow...

N.B.: On the German trucks?

E.Z.: No, on a train. We traveled from the border at Przemysl on trains. We got to... Krakow...

N.B.: How did it feel to be back in Poland?

E.Z.: Tell the truth, I don't know, I didn't think about it, I... I was pretty angry, I was pretty angry about the stamps and all that, I was pretty saddened by that, and... when we came back to Krakow we had no place to stay, so we went to Wieliczka, my mother's and aunt's hometown, and we stayed at some peasant's house, s...

N.B.: Wait, but Ziggy was with you, right?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: Did you take him to his mother?

E.Z.: To Krakow, yes, yes, yes. She was waiting for us.

N.B.: She was waiting.

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: Up until then she didn't go to Brazil, he couldn't arrange it for her. It didn't work out.

E.Z.: Nothing.

N.B.: And you all went (E.Z.: To Wieliczka) together to Wieliczka?

E.Z.: Yes, and...

N.B.: Did you walk there?

E.Z.: Um... I... I don't remember exactly. We got there. We got there. Uh... I don't know, uh... maybe we got a ride on some wagon, it's 14 kilometers, it's not very far.

N.B.: I'll try to put in order what you just said. You got to Krakow and met your aunt there.

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: Where was she in Krakow?

E.Z.: At some family's house.

N.B.: On the Aryan side?

E.Z.: Yes, but... but we couldn't stay there, uh... ourselves. She said right away, that woman said that she wouldn't take such a large family. So we went to Wieliczka.

N.B.: Where in Wieliczka?

E.Z.: We rented a house in Wieliczka. A small peasants' house, very uh...poor, and there we lived, not for long though. Sad [sobs].

N.B.: Whom did you rent it from?

E.Z.: Some peasant, I think my mother and aunt knew his family, and... he gave us uh... half of his house, that is, two rooms and a kitchen, it wasn't... without running water, and we had to draw water from a well outside, and there were chickens, again, a very different atmosphere, and again uh... a very different way of life, and... again a new beginning, but there were many Jews there, whom my parents... my mother knew, lots of people knew each other in Wieliczka, we got there at the... end... now... uh... end of June, uh... we got to Wieliczka, and then uh... mother uh... wanted very much for me to go to school, and there was this school uh... inside a house, this clandestine kind of thing, that was arranged, and the person in charge was incidentally Lena Kichler's sister.

N.B.: Who was what? A teacher?

E.Z.: She was a teacher, yes.

N.B.: What was her name?

E.Z.: Uh... Fela, Fela Kichler. And we studied at her place...

N.B.: She was from there? From Wieliczka?

E.Z.: Yes, yes. Lena too (N.B.: Lena too). Uh... Lena Kichler also came from Wieliczka. Yes.

N.B.: And Fela organized this school?

E.Z.: Yes. And we learned, we learned about Bialik, about Herzl, about history and... geography and calculus, and Polish, I mean, uh... we wrote essays uh... and... it was a wonderful period.

N.B.: How many pupils were you?

E.Z.: Uh... around... I don't know, 25, 30.

N.B.: All from Wieliczka?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: All Jews?

E.Z.: All Jews.

N.B.: And was there some connection with Beitar for you?

E.Z.: No, no. It has nothing to do with it, I... by then I'd left Beitar, I didn't think about Beitar anymore, no. I studied. And that really filled my days, uh... again, a totally different way of life.

N.B.: Was it really a classroom, a place where you'd go to (E.Z.: Yes, yes, yes), and they arranged for tables and chairs?

E.Z.: There were tab... there were uh... wooden benches, uh... nothing extravagant, uh... a house. Lena's and Fela's father was uh... a very devout man, so in the morning and in the evening we'd pray, and after that study. Also, you couldn't walk uh... walk with a schoolbag or anything, or a notebook, really... [thump] really uh... so the Germans wouldn't see, we'd go one by one, one through the yard, one uh... from the opposite side, and... so that... so that there wouldn't be a crowd, so they wouldn't notice. And actually they did find out about it eventually, so we s... we studied at each other's homes. We'd gather up at... at each one's house, a different person's house each day, but that was only a short period because it was '42 already, and again they deported the...

N.B.: What do you mean by short? It's ha... about half a year, right (Uh... nine months, nine months, yes)? At least six or nine months? Starting in the summer, all through the winter.

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: And were there Ger... many Germans around there during that time?

E.Z.: Yes. Yes. And everyone had to wear the... Star of David with uh... this ribbon, yes?

N.B.: With the yellow ribbon? Yes.

E.Z.: Yes, no, it was... in Poland it wasn't yellow, it was white (N.B.: White) with a blue Star of David. In Wieliczka.

N.B.: Tell me, during... and what was father doing for all that time?

E.Z.: Father was doing nothing. Father didn't come out of the house. Mother would go out with my aunt to sell, that is, she would... she'd take pillowcases and tablecloths from people and... she'd go to villages, she'd bring cheese, again, she'd sell cheese, or butter, or stuff, she was away from home for almost all of the week. Mother supported us, here mother supported us, she and my aunt. Yes. Father didn't work. We were afraid that they'd catch him, which did happen eventually, but...

N.B.: Why were you afraid? Did they arrest Jews who went out?

E.Z.: Yes. They'd catch Jews... they'd catch Jews on the street, if someone didn't have a steady job or something, then they'd ca... they'd catch them and that'd be the end of it.

N.B.: What do you mean by the end of it?

E.Z.: Uh... they'd disappear. Disappear.

N.B.: Were you aware (E.Z.: Yes, yes, yes, yes) of such incidents of people disappearing?

E.Z.: Yes. So we didn't let him out of the house. And... it was a rough winter again, uh... and... then spring came, uh... and summer, and suddenly...

N.B.: One more question, you were in Wieliczka (E.Z.: Yes) uh... but meanwhile, a short time after you got to Wieliczka, another... another war broke out.

E.Z.: No, it already broke... it broke out when we left.

N.B.: When you left Lwow?

E.Z.: In June... June 21st, '41, the Barbarossa war. So...

N.B.: Where were you at the time?

E.Z.: We were crossing... in June 19th, two days earlier, we crossed the border. The war had already broken out.

N.B.: And what... what did... uh... did you feel that war in any way?

E.Z.: No, I can't say. That we did. At least in Wieliczka we didn't feel it.

N.B.: What did you know about the war?

E.Z.: We knew from the press, uh... that the Germans were advancing, from the radio maybe, but uh... no... nothing more than that, no.

N.B.: So you were lucky actually.

E.Z.: We were lucky. We were lucky in that we came ba... lucky and unlucky, yes? Because suppose we'd stayed in Russia, then I wouldn't be left all alone, so I think, someone of my family would've survived. And the way it was, we were lucky in that we came back, and had a year of... a year I think, thirteen months, of a somehow normal life, with food, I'd bake round bread, I... four kilos of bread, in four loaves, I'd go to the bakery, put it in the oven, a few hours later we'd return, I mean, we had minimal food, but we had food, not like in Russia, that's what I'm saying. Again, it was ups and downs and ups and downs again. And suddenly uh... father went out, in '42, in... before the High Holidays, father went out and he was captured and never came back.

N.B.: How did you know that?

E.Z.: He didn't come back.

N.B.: He just didn't come back.

E.Z.: Father didn't come back, didn't send letters, nothing, so we were left alone but it... it... life went by so quickly that... we thought, he didn't come back, maybe he's alive somewhere, maybe we'll meet him, but meanwhile life goes on, they announce a total uh... deportation of... of Wieliczka, and then we...

N.B.: Of the Jews from Wieliczka.

E.Z.: Of the Jews. And then our family, with my mother and aunt, we uh... hide, at this peasant's place who gave us half his house, we hide, hide inside some uh... place, and there's a total deportation, we hear shouting and shooting, and... terrible things, and three days later the peasant says, you have to come out...

N.B.: [Talks to cameraman]

E.Z.: We come out... come out, he had arranged for us baskets with uh... live chickens, eggs, as if we were going to the market in Krakow. We, peasants, as if we were peasants, and were going to the market in Krakow.

N.B.: You said you heard shooting (E.Z.: Yes) and terrible things, what was that?

E.Z.: They killed people, they took people to the camps, and indeed, on the way, when we were leaving Wieliczka, we saw a lot of dead people. People whom we knew. We walked over the corpses and went on.

N.B.: Jews whom you knew from Wieliczka?

E.Z.: Yes. Yes.

N.B.: Do you remember who, for example?

E.Z.: Sorry?

N.B.: Do you remember who?

E.Z.: P... uh... people whose names I knew, and... I saw them, the corpses, and she said, mother said, don't look, walk on, we're gentiles, and we're not... we're pretending to be gentiles, we're not... don't look, don't stop, walk, walk like there's nothing the matter. But we physically walked over the bodies and... we got to Krakow.

N.B.: Let's change the tape here and...

Tape Three

N.B.: We're on 03? Running? Edith, did you know back then... when you were in Wieliczka, you actually described the deportation from Wieliczka (E.Z.: Yes), uh... did you know the word *Akcja*?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: What happened in Wieliczka was an *Akcja*?

E.Z.: Yes. A Total *Akcja*. They took everyone.

N.B.: And you hid, actually, right?

E.Z.: We hid for three days. And he'd bring us (N.B.: He... he means the Polish peasant, right?) food, yes, and...

N.B.: Whom m... mother knew from before the war.

E.Z.: His parents, yes, yes, yes. And... mother uh... when we left, mother uh... spoke with a friend, a school friend who lived nearby, and said, "Edith will come back". That I did not understand. To this day I do not understand what mother said back then. Said in Polish, "Tosiu, Editka wroca." Uh... Editka will come back. From where? What? I had no idea, but I did come back.

N.B.: In what context did she say that?

E.Z.: Uh... she saw that... the neighbor, mother's school friend, uh... she saw they were deporting the Jews, that something was going to happen. And we went to hide, yes? It was all in that s... that small house, and mother gave her all sorts of stuff, pictures, and her fur, that fath... uh... father had bought her, and candlesticks, because we couldn't take that with us, yes? And she said, "Editka will come back". I looked at her, I didn't understand, where will I come back from? What was that supposed to mean? Just uh... the future was so uh... that there wasn't... but I said, "why, why did you say I will come back?" She said, "You will." That was it. Three years later I came back.

N.B.: You say you gave her some candlesticks (E.Z.: Yes, yes) and some fur, did you take those things with you from your house in Lwow?

E.Z.: No, it's, no, no. No, no, no...

N.B.: Things you bought in...

E.Z.: Mother purchased that, yes. In Wieliczka, yes. I think.

N.B.: In Wieliczka.

E.Z.: Just, just, we just bought the candlesticks for the Shabbath, there was Shabbath, yes? They were silver, yes?

N.B.: I want uh... to go back a little, to the time when you were in Lwow, there are two things that I'd like to return to.

E.Z.: Yes?

N.B.: One is the... the Russian officer, his name... what was his name?

E.Z.: I don't remember. I really don't remember. There are things that I... that I don't remember. I don't remember his name.

N.B.: You actually had a pretty meaningful relationship with him.

E.Z.: Yes. And... but his name I don't remember.

N.B.: Because he asked you to come and visit him at the hospital every day...

E.Z.: Yes. Yes.

N.B.: And you came every day?

E.Z.: Yes. Uh... uh... uh... the soldiers came to my home and took me there every day. Every day.

N.B.: Soviet soldiers came to your home every day...

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: They escorted you?

E.Z.: Yes, they took me to the hospital in a jeep.

N.B.: And how long would you stay?

E.Z.: I think... uh... I'd sit by him, I remember, I'd caress his hand, uh... I really pitied him, he was very handsome, uh... and I really felt sorry, and there was really some con... connection created between us, and... I'd tell him stories, and he would get me stamps, and it... it was a... really a very nice hour I'd spend with him, and... I knew I had to do something, because it was my fault he... this happened to him, yes? Later he took off the... they took the bandages off him, and he'd come over to our home uh... wearing uh... a uniform, to visit us on Friday night. And back then we didn't have candlesticks there, we improvised something, but he said that his mother lighted candles too. And then uh... he'd bring something each time he came, and the soldiers would bring me stuff, flour, sugar, he'd really support us. That's it.

N.B.: And what did you talk about when you'd come and visit him at the hospital?

E.Z.: He'd tell me about the... about his mother (N.B.: Where were they from?), about his studies, um... next to Kiev, Bamia, n... Kiev, he said that, he told me that... uh... he'd been taken from his mother's house, from school, and... he continued studying with a government subsidy, I mean, he wasn't home often, he was always at school, and he finished medical school and was conscripted in the airforce, that I remember. The... the... his uniforms, uh... and... and... all the decorations, and an officer, right.

N.B.: And you stayed in touch all through your time in Lwow?

E.Z.: Yes. Yes.

N.B.: When he got out of the hospital, too?

E.Z.: Yes, yes. He'd come to visit us. Yes.

N.B.: Would you come to visit him also?

E.Z.: No. No, at his place where he worked, no. Tsk.

N.B.: And when you knew that you were going back?

E.Z.: Then uh... I contacted him, I said goodbye, that we were leaving, uh... real shame. I told him, it was because of my cousin. He wished me well. He wished me well and we went. He probably knew that uh... that a war was about to break out. We didn't know, we didn't know.

N.B.: That you didn't know, but you might have known something else. During your time in Lwow, did Polish refugees arrive?

E.Z.: Yes. Yes, all the time.

N.B.: And what did they say was going on back there?

E.Z.: No... nothing was going on. '40, nothing was going on yet. There was a ghetto established in Krakow, but not yet... there was no Auschwitz or anything yet.

N.B.: They talked about a ghetto in Krakow?

E.Z.: T... talked uh... yes. Krakow and... yes. That... people were going out to organized work, men, and that was why only men didn't... escaped from Poland. The women stayed behind. Only the men uh... all... all... all of the refugee population from uh... Poland was men, there were almost no... no women in Lwow. Almost.

N.B.: Female refugees?

E.Z.: Yes. And the men would escape and say that they'll be back after a while. That's it. So they were very envious of us, that we were a whole unified family going together. They each gave us letters to give to their wives and mothers and all... we really did deliver everything we could to loved ones. That's it.

N.B.: Well, we're going back to Wieliczka, uh... winter '42, right (E.Z.: No, no)? Or spring already?

E.Z.: No, no. Not '42 anymore, not '42.

N.B.: No, I mean, you came back in summer '41...

E.Z.: '41 (N.B.: and we were talking about...), winter '41-'42, yes, yes...

N.B.: And now we're in winter '41-'42, when was the *Akcja* in Wieliczka?

E.Z.: In September. During the High Holidays of '42.

N.B.: S... September '42?

E.Z.: Yes. July, July, August, something like that, I have it written down... but around that time. Yes.

N.B.: At the end of the summer (E.Z.: Yes), after the summer.

E.Z.: Yes, yes. Almost all the *Aktcjas* were carried out during the... Holidays.

N.B.: And you hid, waited for three days, and decided to go to Krakow.

E.Z.: We went to Krakow.

N.B.: Pretending to be Aryans.

E.Z.: Pretending to be Aryans, yes. And mother wanted to arrange Aryan papers for us, and there already were uh... they were already prepared for her, and we were left with this family...

N.B.: Do you know who arranged the papers? How?

E.Z.: Sorry? No.

N.B.: Don't know.

E.Z.: No. [laughs] Some Mrs. Schindler. But I don't know... I don't think it's the same Schindler. Uh... Schindler from Katowice, who was a German whose husband was Jewish, she was called Schindler, and she uh... was going to... to arrange papers for my mother and aunt, and we were supposed to run away from Krakow to somewhere where nobody would know us. And one day, when mother went out to get the papers, she didn't return. Somebody talked, and they took mother to the Gestapo, Monteluppi, in Kr... in Krakow, and I stayed with the three children. At that family's house.

N.B.: And where was father?

E.Z.: Father was gone for the time being.

N.B.: Oh, father was already taken away in Wieliczka.

E.Z.: In Wieliczka and...

N.B.: In Wieliczka.

E.Z.: Uh... there was no... they even said that... he was seen dead. We already [laughs] father didn't exist for us anymore.

N.B.: Now, when you say that one day your mother went out with your aunt to get papers...

E.Z.: Yes?

N.B.: From... today you say Monteluppi, how... (E.Z.: Yes), did you know that back then?

E.Z.: Uh... that same day, no. That same day I didn't know she was in Monteluppi, I found out later.

N.B.: One moment, I... you... at the time, when she didn't return, you were with your sister...

E.Z.: And my two cousins,

N.B.: Four children (E.Z.: Yes). Where?

E.Z.: At that Christian family's house.

N.B.: In Krakow?

E.Z.: In Krakow.

N.B.: When did you find out that... what had happened to mother?

E.Z.: That what?

N.B.: What... what had happened to mother.

E.Z.: We didn't... didn't know anything, she ju...

N.B.: Whe... when did you find out?

E.Z.: Uh... and... and that woman in Krakow said she couldn't have us, we had no money or anything, four children on her hands, she said go. And then we went out and I said... said to my cousins and to my sister, we have to get into the ghetto. We have no choice. There is nothing for us to do, nothing to it. I stole a few apples in the

market and gave them to them, we slept outside for one night uh... in some house, and the next morning we entered the ghetto.

N.B.: You knew that the ghetto was your refuge?

E.Z.: Yes, a refuge for us all, for... for the three of us (N.B.: Were there any...). For the four of us.

N.B.: Were there any preparations for this? Was there ever a conversation with mother (E.Z.: Nothing, no, no, no), in which she said, if I'm not back or something?

E.Z.: Nothing. She went in the morning and didn't come back. Uh... so we entered the ghetto...

N.B.: How did you get into the ghetto?

E.Z.: Uh... we asked to be let in.

N.B.: Through the gate?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: You four children came (E.Z.: Yes, yes, yes) and said, we're Jewish children, we want to...

E.Z.: Yes, yes. There was the Jewish police, next to the gate, they asked, where is mother, where is father, I said, we have no one, so they let us in. And then we were distributed among different families...

N.B.: Who distributed you?

E.Z.: Uh... there was a Jewish uh... Committee, uh... and they were in charge, so they said, go over there. We went, and we were distributed among several families, uh... temporarily, to take care, to work, to help, and I was with this family, uh... we were five people together, that is, four, a woman with her three... three children, and me. And I... we all slept in the same bed, and I would uh... clean the offices of the Jewish Committee, the... they were inside the house and she was responsible for it, So I... I... I would clean the... instead of her, in return for her having me, and we'd meet uh... my sister and cousins and me, uh... every two or three days. They'd tell about their troubles, about how people were treating them, I was content uh... with that family, uh... and... the boy would go out to work.

N.B.: Who was the boy?

E.Z.: That lady's son. He was sixteen, he'd go to work outside the ghetto, and he'd bring me ch... in the evening he'd always bring me a piece of chocolate, a piece of sausage, instead of giving it to his sister and sister, and... sister and brother, he'd give it to me.

N.B.: Why?

E.Z.: Uh... he liked me, I don't know.

N.B.: What was his name?

E.Z.: Egon Brill.

N.B.: Uh... I wanted to ask, here you fall into this family whom you don't know (E.Z.: yes), how uh... did you deal with that?

E.Z.: Nothing [to it]. Nothing. You get by. You adapt. Very quickly. There's no choice. Life is so intensive that you haven't got any time to think about anything.

N.B.: But you were strangers...

E.Z.: Yes, but they received me well.

N.B.: Yes?

E.Z.: Yes. A German speaking family, and... they received me, I did all sorts of work for the lady, I did the laundry and... I took care of everything, again, uh... so as not to become a burden, but give them something in return, yes? And that's it. Um... I was there, I don't know, two or three weeks, that's all, and they announced that... they were taking the children away...

N.B.: But... one second, before that, please, I'd like to try and get inside your head, see how you saw the world, as an eleven year old girl?

E.Z.: Yes, I was already eleven.

N.B.: Father was gone.

E.Z.: Yes, uh...

N.B.: Mother was gone.

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: How do you live in the world?

E.Z.: You don't... don't... don't... don't...think. Life goes on, and everyday there's something else, and you can't think about... about what's going on. You're not capable, at least I wasn't. They, even less. And... it so happens that I go out, and I see my father. Not outside the ghetto, inside the ghetto. And I can't believe it. It's been almost uh... almost half a year since I saw him, and they said he was dead, and he doesn't want to touch [me], and I uh... start crying hysterically, uh... I said, this is not my father, and then I wake up in some... not a hospital, but some kind of room uh... with a nurse, they probably... I got a shot, because I was hysterical. And it turned out that father worked uh... in a factory, not far from Krakow, and came to the Krakow ghetto to get showers. It's like... it's called... delousing. And then father uh... leaves

me a message, that he has to go back, he... I didn't speak to him anymore, he leaves me a message there that he were in Biezanaw, that's between Wieliczka and Krakow, and that he wants me to come to him there.

N.B.: Just a moment. You meet father on the street.

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: You don't believe your eyes. (E.Z.: I don't believe, no.) You're hysterical. (E.Z.: Yes.) You find yourself in some kind of... place, they calm you down... (E.Z.: Yes, a kind of ambulatorium, yes.) And father is at your side?

E.Z.: No, no. Father had to go back. Father could not... It's, a group of 25 people arrived, 25 people has to go out together, it's not him [alone]... he could not stay. But leaves me a not that he is in Biezanaw, that's between Wieliczka and Krakow, and he'll do whatever he can so I will come and be with him.

N.B.: Who shows you this note?

E.Z.: No, it was next to me. It was probably a note that the nurse, that he wrote, she... she gave this to me, the note. And I tell the children about it, to... and they don't believe it, of course, no, and a few days later there's an *Akcja* of children. There is going to be an *Akcja*, all the children under fourteen must be taken away, so they told us.

N.B.: In... in the ghetto? (E.Z.: In the ghetto) An *Akcja* in the ghetto.

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: How did you find out?

E.Z.: Stories (N.B.: A rumor), everyone was hiding their child, and wants to send him out of the ghetto, those who had money, and all. We have no choice (N.B.: Who is we?), and we go... the four of us, the... my band... my... we... so... uh... so I said, we have to get out of the ghetto, but here they don't let people out, they are not letting people out of the ghetto, the ghetto is already closed.

N.B.: So, one minute, I can see that you really want to get out of the ghetto in the story already, but I want a little bit (E.Z.: Yes?) more on the ghetto, before you go out (E.Z.: Yes), alright? You are four children.

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: Each sent to a different family.

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: Until you came out of the ghetto, how long were you there?

E.Z.: I don't know, one, one and a half months.

N.B.: And you say that you got along well in that family.

E.Z.: Yes, yes.

N.B.: What was the family called?

E.Z.: Brill.

N.B.: Brill. And you'd meet every day or two (E.Z.: Yes), and tell [each other] how you were doing.

E.Z.: Yes. My sister cried, cried a lot, that they treated her very... she was small, she was nine, they treated her very badly, gave her hard work to do, Jewish families.

N.B.: Yes.

E.Z.: And she couldn't take it, so she wanted to be with me, but there was no room for her there. So uh... (N.B.: So she suffered?) Yes, so I'd give her whatever I had, and my cousins also complained. I was content. And... I start hearing rumors, and I gather up the... three of them, and we get into the sewer, in the ghetto, and get out on the other side.

N.B.: How did you know that was the way out?

E.Z.: They said so. They said, you want to get into the sewer and get out on the other side, go. And in Schindler, in the Schindler movie, uh... by uh... yes? There, now, when he made a movie out of it, it's nice and clean, you go there on foot, it's pretty, dry, but then it was full of mud, and... excuse the expression, yes? We came out covered with uh... stench, I cleaned everybody with a hose, outside the ghetto, and we went to Wieliczka. The four of us.

N.B.: To Wieliczka?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: But father, in the note, he (E.Z.: Yes, yes, yes father...) didn't write about Wieliczka, what did he write?

E.Z.: Biezanaw. It was a work [camp]. Closed. Not... not closed like the ghetto, but closed. We couldn't get in uh... all four of us. So I go to Wieliczka, distribute the children among gentiles.

N.B.: How do you distribute the children among gentiles?

E.Z.: I went. I went to... some acquaintances, I asked one to have my cousin, another my other cousin, and a third my sister, and I go back to Biezanaw.

N.B.: You are really the leader of this band.

E.Z.: I am the leader, yes. Yes.

N.B.: Do they accept this?

E.Z.: They accept it. They have no choice. They cry, don't leave us, I said, there's no choice. The four of us can't go the Biezanaw, I'll be back. And I did go to Biezanaw, got to Biezanaw, got in...

N.B.: How?

E.Z.: Uh... it was guarded by uh... Ukrainians, who would meet, and then go around the... the ghetto, around the camp, so the moment I saw they uh... (N.B.: Were walking away) were apart, I lifted the fence, which wasn't electrified, and got into the ghetto, met my father.

N.B.: The camp, not the ghetto.

E.Z.: Yes, and I got a job there...

N.B.: How was father when you met him there?

E.Z.: Terrible condition. In a terrible condition. There were these... *prycza*, the... what are they called in Hebrew?

N.B.: Bunks.

E.Z.: Bunks.

N.B.: These wooden bunks.

E.Z.: Yes, and... but that's it, he was pleased with what I had done, uh... and, I got a job in the kitchen peeling potatoes. But then... the supervising doctor said they had to change my age, that I had to gather my hair in a ponytail and put some rouge on my face, so that I'd be 15.

N.B.: One moment. You got into the camp (E.Z.: Yes), you managed to find your father.

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: Was it difficult to find father?

E.Z.: No, because it wasn't a... a big camp, it was, I don't know, but not a big camp, and... I found him.

N.B.: Uh... uh... How did you get a job in the kitchen, what do you mean by got a job in the kitchen?

E.Z.: I... everyone in the... the... camp, there were no children there, everyone had to work. So uh... they decided to pass me as a fifteen-year-old who could work.

N.B.: Who is they? The inmates? The... The...

E.Z.: Father together with... with the people in charge of the camp, who were Jews, there was Dr. Lipszyc, and... others, and...

N.B.: Jews were running that camp?

E.Z.: Yes, in... under the Germans. That was a work camp, it wasn't a concentration camp yet, (N.B.: Um hum?) Yes?

N.B.: What did father do there?

E.Z.: They uh... they were building uh... new uh... railroads. Yes. It was called Julag. And I worked in the kitchen, and sometimes I'd go out to Wieliczka, to see what the children were doing, and everything was fine, until one day my sister appeared.

N.B.: How long were you there?

E.Z.: Excuse me?

N.B.: How long were you there?

E.Z.: Uh... A few months. Just a... few, not... not many. Uh... my sister appeared next to the fence, crying, and I told her, again, wait until the guards disperse, and I lifted the fence for her, and she got in.

N.B.: How did you notice her next to the fence? By chance?

E.Z.: Either that or she told someone and I came over, I can't remember, but, I... I saw her with my eyes near the fence. Someone said that she said Zierer, Edith Zierer, So uh... I went over to the fence and let her in. And I told father, then we were still together, men and women, we weren't separated, I said, father, this is dangerous, she came here and... they'll see her, she's little, and... so father says to me, look, she needs to feel you and me a little, let her stay. Sleep with her. The same night there was an *Akcja*, and I put her into my backpack, that I had, and carried her to Plaszow.

N.B.: What do you mean, the same night there was an *Akcja*?

E.Z.: That... that night they decided [pauses and sobs]... the same night the Germans came with dogs, and took the entire camp to Plaszow [sob]. And her, she was little, I don't know how much she weighed, thin [sob], I... I said to father, I'm putting her in... into my backpack and I'll carry her. And so we went to Plaszow [sob].

N.B.; What... how far was that camp from Plaszow?

E.Z.: I don't know, seven kilometers [sob], eight kilometers. To Wieliczka it was 14 or 15, that was halfway there [sob].

N.B.: So the Germans took all of this camp's prisoners (E.Z.: Yes, to the last) to Plaszow?

E.Z.: They liquidated the camp. The camp got to... to Plaszow. Now, Plaszow had an electric fence, and I told myself, this must be a big camp, and here take father to the men's section, and... I, with my sister inside my backpack, get one place, the third place, and she doesn't... that is, we got a card, everyone who came in, uh... a food card, for soup and bread, I couldn't get one for her, so we had to share everything [sob], and I work, go out to work for twelve hours, and she stays up there.

N.B.: What did you work in?

E.Z.: I worked in attaching buttons to... German uniforms.

N.B.: One second. [sob] About entering Plaszow, do you remember the entrance to the camp? Who was guarding the camp?

E.Z.: Uh... Gestapo.

N.B.: Germans?

E.Z.: Germans, of course. Goeth was the... in charge...

N.B.: Goeth?

E.Z.: Goeth, yes.

N.B.: Because you said in Biezanaw they were Ukrainians?

E.Z.: Yes, yes.

N.B.: Here... here, Germans?

E.Z.: Yes, yes. Here, Germans. This was a real camp [sob], with electricity, with... the fence was electric...

N.B.: And you were put in a women's barrack.

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: And father?

E.Z.: We were separated. Yes. I see him from time to time through the fence. I don't really meet him anymore, and...

N.B.: And you were put to work?

E.Z.: To work, twelve hours, shifts... [alternating between] twelve day hours and twelve night hours.

N.B.: What kind of work?

E.Z.: Like I s... said, I was attaching buttons uh... to... German uh... uniforms [sob].

N.B.: It was a sewing workshop?

E.Z.: A sewing workshop, yes.

N.B.: Who was in charge of the uh... sewing workshop?

E.Z.: I don't know. That I don't remember (N.B.: Don't remember?). That... that was again, a monotonous job, uh... and... like many others, yes? I wasn't... wasn't interested, I really, that... actually all through that period in the uh... camps I wasn't too interested in what was going on, and... what... what there was, a routine. I did what I had to do and... that's it [sob].

N.B.: Twelve hours, you say.

E.Z.: Twelve hours.

N.B.: When did you eat?

E.Z.: When they gave food, I guess. This uh... thin soup and a piece of bread (N.B.: Um hum), a slice of bread.

N.B.: But you shared it with your sister.

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: How did you share it with her?

E.Z.: I'd... I wouldn't eat it all, I'd bring some for her.

N.B.: You'd bring it to her in the barrack?

E.Z.: Yes. After work. But later people who were in the barrack and knew she was down there would care for her a little, because she would fix their socks, all kinds of things, they told me [sob], so they'd g... bring her some food.

N.B.: She was al...

E.Z.: They'd take care of her.

N.B.: She was always in the barrack.

E.Z.: In the barrack, upstairs, and she wouldn't come down.

N.B.: And she'd wait for you actually.

E.Z.: Sorry?

N.B.: And she waited for you.

E.Z.: And she waited for me. And one day... I had to go out to... to work in the morning, to... uh... and three times she called me back to the third level to say goodbye. I said goodbye to her three times, and I went and she called me back up, and again, back up, I said, what's the matter, I'm coming back in the evening. And I never came back. I never came back [pauses and sobs]. In the evening they took us to a special [sob] uh... barrack, and... there were train cars, not far away from there [sob], and they put us into the railcars [sob], eighty people, into the railcars, uh... and went to Auschwitz.

N.B.: Straight from the workshop...

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: Into the railcars.

E.Z.: Yes. And we got to Auschwitz and I heard how *ausztigen* [get out!] that...

N.B.: You... you knew where you were going?

E.Z.: No, I didn't know, I just heard, Auschwitz, *ausztigen*, and I heard dogs, you know in those railcars there was only [a window] in... in the ceiling [sob], and they didn't open our car. And people were running, and cried, and yelled, and we couldn't see anything. A few hours later, in which we stood there, uh... two railcars, uh... were added to the train [sob], and... we went on, without opening, without opening anything, with no food or anything. And we got...

N.B.: How did you know you were in Auschwitz?

E.Z.: I heard.

N.B.: They said so?

E.Z.: Yes, they yelled. "*Halt, Auschwitz. Schnell, schnell ausztigen.*" That's it. It's... the usual routine, and there were dogs [sob]. Lots of dogs. Uh... they were barking, and we, our car they didn't open [coughs]. Afterwards we heard this impact of two railcars against each other, and... we went, off we went again. Quite a long time. And we get to this place, and I was next to the door, it had uh... this kind of latch, I must've get in last, I had turned around when they pushed me into the car, I had turned because of the pressure, 80 people meant great pressure, and some were already dead inside the car, and I was next to the latch, which was closed from the outside, we get to this place, tr... the train stops, and the car is opened, but only to a crack so that only I fall out. They closed it immediately. Because in... with that pressure, many would've fallen out. I fall on the... and there are Ger... some Germans there, and he asks uh... what's that shit that's fallen here, in German. "*Was wie ein drek raus gefallen*" And I s... stand up, and say, uh... I'm not *dreck*, my name is Edith Zierer from Katowice, in German. So the man says, "what?" aiming a flashlight at me, it was night. "What's your name?" I say, Edith Zierer. He says, "your

father is Max?" He was a friend of father's from Katowice, who was a *Volksdeutsche*. And the tr... they give an order, close the cars, this car, the train moves on, and I stay with this German. And a few others. And this was *Werk A*, there were three *Werk's*.

N.B.: *Werk A* where?

E.Z.: Skarzysko-Kamienna. Uh... a weapons factory. And he takes me into the... camp, and gives uh...

N.B.: Wait a minute, except for what you've described, did you have any further conversation?

E.Z.: With whom? That man?

N.B.: That German and you.

E.Z.: Yes, he said that he... he's a friends of father's, and asked where's father, I told him, in Plaszow. He stayed in Plaszow. He asked where was mother. I said, mother is in... Monteluppi, the... uh... by then I knew where she was, in the Gestapo in Krakow.

N.B.: How did you find out?

E.Z.: Um... there... there came someone from the ghetto, and he brought me a letter and... some necklace from mother, a token from her. And mother wrote that she uh... that I should be strong, and take care of the children, and everything will be OK. And it said, Monteluppi. And Gestapo. And meanwhile we had gone out through the sewer...

N.B.: Was it... did you recognize mother's handwriting?

E.Z.: Yes, yes. But they were sent to Belzec a little later, so there was no more contact.

N.B.: That was the last contact.

E.Z.: Y... the... only contact.

N.B.: The only one. And how did you find out that they were sent to Belzec?

E.Z.: I didn't find out, I found out only after the war ended. It wasn't... I didn't know. I only knew, this and this date, it was before we uh... it was the first camp, in Belzec. Anyway uh... where...

N.B.: So you're standing with that German and he asks you about father?

E.Z.: Yes. And I tell him, and he takes me, "*Komm... Komm hier*", come with me, and says, "you'll stay here in *Werk A*." And I started working the machines, and he says, write father a letter.

N.B.: One moment, stay in *Werk A*, but *Werk A* is a factory, are there... (E.Z.: It's a factory) where, where did you live, where...

E.Z.: No, there... there... there are... barracks.

[interruption]

N.B.: The cassette? Sorry. Uh...

Tape Four

N.B.: ...you got to... Skarzysko.

E.Z.: Yes, *Werk A*. There were three *Werk*'s, three... camps, A, B and C. Had I chanced upon B or C I wouldn't have survived. There uh... they made this powder they put into... uh...

N.B.: Bullets? Shells?

E.Z.: Shells and bullets, yes. I worked on uh... rifles' bullets, the small ones.

N.B.: Rifles' bullets?

E.Z.: Yes. But over there in *Werk B* and *C*, they made the powder, it was yellow, and people would come back from there all yellow. With yellow hairs, those who still had hair, fingernails, faces, and they died... soon.

N.B.: Where did you see them?

E.Z.: They would come to us uh... to bathe, or... for some kind of a day or two healing period, to... to *Werk A*. *Werk A*, that was the best *Werk*. However we did work twelve hours, both night and day shifts, I got a crate for my machine, because I was too short, and I couldn't reach it, and... tell the truth the Germans uh... treated me well. The German *meisters*. Maybe because I spoke German, maybe because I was little, uh... and... no, they treated me well, and they'd bring me food.

N.B.: To work?

E.Z.: The *meisters* would b... there we'd get a slice of bread, and... soup, water. And that was it. No more.

N.B.: Was there... you lived in a barrack, right?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: Was there a morning roll call?.

E.Z.: Yes, in fives.

N.B.: And what would take place during this roll call?

E.Z.: They'd count us, and we'd go out to work.

N.B.: Where did you work? Far away from where you lived?

E.Z.: It was a walk, uh... yes, I don't know, a few kilometers, three, three kilometers maybe, no... I can't say, but it was a walk.

N.B.: Who guarded you?

E.Z.: Germans.

N.B.: What Germans?

E.Z.: Not, SS, I think *Wermacht*, Germans.

N.B.: Did they march you?

E.Z.: They marched us.

N.B.: Was the walk hard for you?

E.Z.: Yes, I got those Dutch clogs, made of wood, they were very heavy, and they'd stick in the snow. So it was hard to walk, no socks, no clothes, I had a coat on which my number was written, on the front and back, and it was colored green and red and white, in a kind of colored ladder, that is, uh... you couldn't escape, uh... they'd see you, yes? Uh... and... we'd work for twelve hours. One day I couldn't meet my... quota, we had to make twelve boxes, in twelve hours, one contain... box per hour.

N.B.: What does that mean, make twelve boxes?

E.Z.: Uh... my machine made... how do you call them? The...

N.B.: Cartridges?

E.Z.: A cartridge. A cartridge has two holes in it, and above them this yellow capsule. That's how a cartridge looks like. But inside there are two holes. I'd make those two holes. My machine. And then my machine started malfunctioning, and... I couldn't... [meet] the quota, and I'd get flogged. Not by the *meisters*, there was this uh... uh... German [female] worker who was responsible for the... for inspecting all the... the... what did you call them?

N.B.: Cartridges.

E.Z.: Cartridges, yes. And she'd flog me... us if we did something wrong. So my machine didn't... didn't function right, so one day uh... I told the *meister* that I was going uh... to fix it. So I dismantled it, in chronological order, from the top down, and replaced all the parts, and it says... it says... I wrote in big letters, *Repartur*, repair. And suddenly, that same day, while I was working on the machine, my *meister* was... he... he agreed to it, he smiled and agreed. Suddenly came some... came these German officers to inspect the whole factory, and they saw that my machine wasn't working, and I, such a little girl, fiddling with it, replacing things with wrenches, with... so they asked, what's this, so my *meister* explained it to them, "she decided to fix her machine, so that she can work and [meet her quota of] 12 boxes." They smiled and went away. There wasn't uh... I reassembled the machine, and afterwards it worked 48 hours straight without any... I made more than I was required to. But having to fiddle with it all the time, changing needles and all that, that annoyed me. So that's it, so the *meister* told me, "if someone, if someone's machine breaks down,

Komm hier, go and look what's wrong with that machine." I was responsible for everything [laugh].

N.B.: So you became uh... the one who maintained the machines there?

E.Z.: No... it's... not... that would be going too far, but he'd joke with me, saying, "come and look why this machine isn't working". And I'd know.

N.B.: How, for you... how was life for you there? Did you meet anyone there (E.Z.: No, it's... it's...)? Anyone... did you make friends with anyone?

E.Z.: No. No one.

N.B.: Were you lonely?

E.Z.: [I was] lonely throughout that whole period. It's... I... I... if I try to remember it all today, there are so many... so many friends who knew each other back in the camps who still meet today. I have no one to meet with.

N.B.: Were you the youngest?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: Is that why you remained alone?

E.Z.: I don't know, they treated me well, say, when the bread was distributed, when we'd get a loaf of bread, they'd give me the tip, which was always a little bigger slice. Yes? The first slice.

N.B.: Who w... who would give you the bread?

E.Z.: Uh... we'd get... in the barracks, we'd get bread, and there was this woman who was responsible for the dis... the...

N.B.: An inmate?

E.Z.: Yes, yes.

N.B.: One of the inmates?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: And she'd give you some more?

E.Z.: Yes, I asked for the *pietka*, that's in Polish, the tip, so uh... during all that time, all the... all that period, I'd get it, the tip. They treated me well, I was little. And I lived on... on the third level.

N.B.: You wanted to live on the third level?

E.Z.: No, it's... it was easiest for me to climb, so uh... the older women were on the lower level, and... that's it.

N.B.: So you got bread, and...

E.Z.: Soup.

N.B.: How were you... physically?

E.Z.: Like everyone else. I weighed 28-29 kilos, out of which, my swollen legs were almost half. Bald (N.B.: Uh...), I could bathe uh... almost everyday, because our machines had... had this process... with soap afterwards, to get the grease off, so uh... there was this guy there who'd give me this box with a kind of brown liquid soap, so I'd go bathe everyday.

N.B.: The German who'd met you when you arrived in the camp, was he one of the (E.Z.: Yes, for a while, yes) uh... camp's personnel? And did he keep uh... contact with you?

E.Z.: Yes, he'd take letters to my father. I wrote a letter to father every day, it was a psychological thing, to feel like I was in touch with father, but father probably never got any of them. I wrote. That's it. And... in the year forty[...]

N.B.: One moment, and... and... he... aside from taking letters to your father, did he help with anything else?

E.Z.: Yes, sometimes [he'd give me] a piece of bread, or... but he couldn't help me [much], so as not stand out, probably, maybe he told the other *meisters* that... in my division, he wasn't in my division, where... where... where we worked, he was in charge of something else, I wouldn't see him every day, but I'd leave him a letter for father in his office. To Plaszow. Plaszow, Krakow, I'd write. But uh... no, afterwards the... the other *meisters* were nice to me, really. If we had to uh... say, there was this other incident in... in Plaszow, because of my German, uh... there were latrines in Plaszow, I don't know if you know what that is. Uh... and there we relieved ourselves. And one day uh... they cleaned them, that is, they cleaned it every day with lysol and all, and... I went to the bathroom, I must have had diarrhea, and there were eight people there, four on every side, excuse me for... with their butts exposed, we relieved ourselves, suddenly a... group of Germans walks in, they were uh... SS, with polished boots, with... and we had to announce, how many people were present. Wherever they went, you had to say "*Ich melde gehosam*" such and such a number of people relieving themselves. How are you supposed to say that? And he said, the one who knew me, he told me to announce it.

N.B.: Who do you mean, the one who knew you? In Plaszow?

E.Z.: In Plaszow, yes, one of our *meisters*, from the... where I worked.

N.B.: From the sewing workshop?

E.Z.: The sewing workshop. So I look back, count the people, and I say “*Ich Melde Gehosam*” but I think to myself, what am I going to say? Uh... right now, what am I going to say? What... what are they doing? I didn’t know how to say defecating or something, I said, “*Acht menchen schissen.*” *Schissen* is... is rude, just shitting. I saw all the Germans smiling, and they went out. They could easily have pulled a gun, shoot, or... sh... shoot me, and I’d have fallen into... into the stuff. But maybe because I was little, or because my German was very good, or maybe both, probably, probably. That was an incident from Krakow. That’s it.

N.B.: From Plaszow?

E.Z.: Now, in Plaszow uh... I was flogged.

N.B.: In Plaszow?

E.Z.: No, not in Plaszow.

N.B.: In Skarzysko?

E.Z.: In Skarzysko, I got flogged, because somebody snitched that I did something wrong.

N.B.: What do you mean by something wrong?

E.Z.: There weren’t two holes, only one. And these cartridges went further into the production process, so that was considered sabotage.

N.B.: Who snitched?

E.Z.: The inspector, the... there was this German woman, who would check with white gloves, each time, she looked, said that I had a lot of waste. And that... you should get flogged for that. My *meister*, my uh... *meister* Brandt, he was called, he was supposed to flog me. So he took me into his office, and hit me once, twice, and he was supposed to hit me 25 times, and after that he told me, “scream, scream”, and hit the table 23 times, and I screamed for each hit. And I understood right away what he was going to do. The way he uh... had... had he hit me 25 times, That... that would have been the end of me. No, he was good, he was OK. Later, when airplanes started coming, towards... not towards the end but uh... American or British planes came, and we had to shut down the machines and turn the lights off, then he’d say, “quick, look for a corner with a crate, it’s going to be dark for about two hours.” That is, he treated me humanely [thump]. And he’d bring me food. A... painted bottle, black, it was labeled grease in German, uh... *getrieboel*, as if it was meant for the machines, and in... inside there was milk. In the... in the beginning I was afraid to eat and drink. But afterwards I drank, and one day he brought, wrapped in parchment paper, a schnitzel sandwich. I was sure they wanted to... to kill me, that is, to give me poisoned food to eat, I... I didn’t believe it was for real. I gave it to my friend to eat, and she ate it and stayed alive. So the next day, when he brought me another, the next day or several days later, I didn’t give it to anyone, I ate it myself. There was this other incident, but that was later, w... I’ll tell it later.

N.B.: So in Skarjeko you... how long were you there?

E.Z.: Skarzysko... '43, uh... I think, a year, thirteen months.

N.B.: That's a very long time.

E.Z.: A very long time.

N.B.: Every day (E.Z.: The same thing every day) you go to work and do the same thing.

E.Z.: Yes. And I had this wound here. It was either a bruise or a wound. The wound was... I didn't know what it was, I'd cover it with a piece of bread, because it oozed, the pus oozed, back then I didn't know what... why the wound, it was my tuberculosis, it was the beginning of my tuberculosis [sniff]. So it... I walked around with that for two years, like that, almost two years.

N.B.: And for all that period you were very lonely?

E.Z.: Lonely. I had no friends and no nothing. No.

N.B.: What, what kept you alive?

E.Z.: Look, you're tired from work, you lie down and go to sleep, you get up in the morning or in the evening, again, to work. They... didn't... I had no time for hanging out, and there wasn't anything to do, and I didn't... didn't talk to anyone. I was very introverted. Very introverted.

N.B.: But did you know what was happening in the war?

E.Z.: No.

N.B.: Were there American planes?

E.Z.: Planes. Yes, but uh... I imagined, but I didn't really know what was happening, no.

N.B.: That the Germans were losing?

E.Z.: That's wh... it... later (N.B.: Later, later), it was after we moved to Czestochowa. In Czestochowa.

N.B.: In Skarzysko you didn't know yet?

E.Z.: I wasn't... wa... wasn't interested, Just like a robot, you go back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, eat what... what... what they give you and that's it. Waiting for... salvation.

N.B.: You thought salvation would come?

E.Z.: I thought something would happen eventually. Yes. But I didn't have any particular thing in mind. And at some point uh... we were gathered up in Skarzysko, and divided into two groups, one going to Leipzig where there was the same kind of weapons factory, Hassag.

N.B.: They told you this there?

E.Z.: Yes, they said, that we were going, some to Czestochowa, where the work was the same, and some to Leipzig. And I was in the Czestochowa group. And... we traveled in uh... railcars which were half open, that is, not closed, but just open, in December. A very rough winter. And I feel I am dying away. Because of the frost. I am really losing my senses, I don't know what's happening to me anymore. And I'm standing in the corner, and there is a soldier next to me, of the *Wermacht*, standing guard. In the four corners there were four soldiers with uh... rifles, and we were in the middle. Freezing cold. You travel in a temperature of uh... minus 35 Centigrade, you travel in an open car, with no clothes, I had a headscarf over my bald head, but uh... aside from that I had no clothes... no winter clothes. I felt that I was literally freezing, and I stood next to that German and said, "*Ich sterbe*", I'm dying, so he took out a bottle, opened it and said: "Drink." Didn't tell me what it was. And I said no, I was again afraid that he was going to poison me or something, so he drank, and afterwards he wiped the bottle, it was this military bottle uh... and he says, "Drink, see, I've had some." And I gulped it down so eagerly, and it was Vodka. It almost burned my innards. But uh... it warmed my... me, and we got the Czestochowa, with no food. We got to Czestochowa.

N.B.: How long did that journey take?

E.Z.: I don't know. I remember seeing the stars at night, it was very cold. We arrived some time around noon the next day.

N.B.: Did everyone make it there alive?

E.Z.: No. No. Only a Few.

N.B.: Few were left.

E.Z.: Few were left. It...

N.B.: The majority?

E.Z.: They either died or arrived in a terrible state. And there immediately broke out a typhus uh... epidemic, but I didn't... didn't get sick. Maybe because of the Vodka, I don't know [laughs]. I wasn't sick. And there we continued working with the same machi... mach... machines.

N.B.: You mean it was an identical factory?

E.Z.: An identical factory, and...

N.B.: And how were the living conditions?

E.Z.: Same conditions. Same conditions except uh... it's right there. You don't walk to the factory, the factory is downstairs and we, there is this barrack above, of, I don't know, 150-200 beds. And we'd just climb the stairs and sleep there. That was a big plus. Yes.

N.B.: And you *meister* was the same one?

E.Z.: Yes. Meier, yes.

N.B.: The same one who took pity on you?

E.Z.: Yes. Yes.

N.B.: Do you (E.Z.: He took pity on to the very end) remember his name? Do you remember his name?

E.Z.: *Meister* Meier, Gerhard Meier, and uh... Richard Brandt, he was another, I mean uh... I actually looked for them after the war. I looked for them.

N.B.: Did you know where they were from?

E.Z.: No, but there are so many Brandts, and so many Meiers, so I couldn't, couldn't know.

N.B.: Because they were kind to you?

E.Z.: (N.B.: What...) Yes. Yes. There was this incident on... on... Yom Kippur in... Czestochowa, someone called out, said that this evening was Yom Kippur, one of the people, the men, he worked... we worked together, lived separately. So uh... somebody came and... this man from Lodz, came and told me, "*Mein kind, heint is Yom Kippur.*" So this, when you don't eat [anyway], all the time, I decide to fast uh... fast. And I got my soup in the evening, and this *meister*, Meier, came, and said, "why aren't you eating your soup." I said, "I'm fasting." So he says, "why", I said that it was a holiday and that we had to fast until tomorrow evening. "How do you know?" I said, "I don't know, but the trees are shedding their leaves, and it's around this time, so I've decided that it's today." And he saw that the next day I... went back to work, and still wasn't eating. So he brought me food form the German kitchen. We had these rusty tin bowls, and he brought me a bowl with this thick soup with... noodles and meat, it gave me diarrhea for months. Probably because my stomach wasn't... my stomach wasn't used to that. But that... that was how he treated me, I mean, really commendable.

N.B.: Did he treat just you this way (E.Z.: Yes), or all the prisoners?

E.Z.: No, just me.

N.B.: And how did they treat the others, these Brandt and Meier?

E.Z.: They treated them, not cruelly, but not like they did me. Not like they did me.

N.B.: They weren't bad people?

E.Z.: No, no. You have to give them that, they really weren't bad. *Meister* Brandt told me, "I have a girl your age at home, I think, she couldn't have survived what you're going through here." And he told me [about it]. That's it. And January uh... January '45 comes...

N.B.: Wait, uh... when did you get to Chlestokova?

E.Z.: I think I got to Czestochowa uh... again, we were there for a year, I think, a year. When we got there it was the end of winter, and we were there until the next winter. That's it. (N.B.: When you go there...) I got there in the winter, and stayed until next winter.

N.B.: When you got to Czestochowa (E.Z.: Yes, yes), to this weapon factory (E.Z.: Yes), Did you meet with other people there? Were there Jews from Czestochowa who survived?

E.Z.: Yes, yes. There were people who were already working there. The camp wasn't set up for us. There were already people who were working there, so uh... we mixed.

N.B.: And do you know whether these people were originally from Czestochowa?

E.Z.: There were locals but there were also... people from Lodz, and some other places. Again, I didn't make friends with anyone.

N.B.: Why was that, actually?

E.Z.: I don't know. I don't know. I can't explain it. I'm very friendly today. I didn't make friends and I was very distrustful. We'd get one teaspoon of sugar once a week, so I took this piece of fabric I found and made a little bag out of it, like that in my collar, and... I put some sugar spoons into it, and each time I felt like it, I'd lick the little bag. And my best friend, who slept next to me, cut it off at night and... that, I said, wasn't humane.

N.B.: She stole it?

E.Z.: Yes. She couldn't resist. Saw that I had and she didn't, she finished hers right away, no, it was... they treated each other very... cruelly there. It was every man to himself. I remember my teeth nearly fell off. From lack of vitamins. I'd take them out like this, complete with the root. Two teeth, here and here. So a prisoner from Wieliczka who was there saw it, and he gave me an onion.

N.B.: Who knew you?

E.Z.: Yes, he knew my father, and he said... he brought me an onion, said, "eat the onion." That strengthened my gums. So there were these moments of uh... and I asked him why, and he said, "we're going to be free soon", he knew more [than I did]. I didn't know anything. The Russians were already around. That was towards January

'45. And then I worked on a night shift, on that fateful day, and I went to sleep, and I didn't come to the *Akcja*, to... to... to that *Appel*, which they announced on the loudspeakers. I was sleeping, I thought, *que serra serra*, I didn't... I didn't feel like it anymore, I was totally exhausted, hungry and exhausted, suddenly, this guy who was in the police... this kind of inner Jewish police, not *Kapo*...

N.B.: The guy from Wieliczka?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: Do you remember his name?

E.Z.: Wolf. Wolf. Yes. And he came to look for me inside the... that big hall where we slept, and he says, "what are you doing here, everyone is waiting and you're missing, they had to sound the call again." And the whole line was responsible, if I was missing from it. So they'd kill the... the... the rest. Everyone was personally responsible for you to be there. In the *Appel*. I was missing, and he carried me on his back, and brought me there, put me in the middle, in the middle of this... quadrate of people, eve... everyone went huh! I heard this, this weeping, what, are they going to kill me now. They put a couple of people next to me, and the rest they put into railcars, and the cars went away, and there's no trace of them left. A small group of people remained in Czestochowa. And then Russians came.

N.B.: Wait a minute, you say, excuse me, you say that if someone was missing then the whole line was responsible and they'd kill them all?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: Did this happen?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: Did you see it?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: Tell me about it.

E.Z.: Uh... it... it... it... it happened in Skarzysko.

N.B.: Yes?

E.Z.: Somebody didn't... didn't show up or escaped. Escaped, and he was absent.

N.B.: And they found out about it in the *Appel*?

E.Z.: Yes. And... there was an *Appel* every day.

N.B.: Yes.

E.Z.: So they killed the entire... I mean, they did it as a demonstration, yes? So as to show to the rest, You have to make sure that the missing person shows up.

N.B.: How did they kill them?

E.Z.: By gunshot.

N.B.: During the *Appel*?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: Who killed them?

E.Z.: The Germans.

N.B.: On the spot?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: With a gun?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: They shot them?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: There was one such incident?

E.Z.: That's the one that... that... that I was present at, but there were others.

N.B.: Were there other incidents, in which they hanged people?

E.Z.: Yes. In Skarzysko.

N.B.: Did you see it?

E.Z.: Yes, we all did.

N.B.: What took place there?

E.Z.: Someone who sabotaged his work, who did something wrong and they found out it was on purpose, they hanged him.

N.B.: In the *Appel*?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: Who hanged him?

E.Z.: The Germans. There was no... no other authority, that's...

N.B.: Didn't they tell... some prisoner to do it?

E.Z.: This I cannot say. It... it was such an experience that you didn't look what was going on, uh... you only... only saw that hanging man and... and... I can't... can't... can't say I saw. But they killed a lot of people. K... Killed a lot of people.

N.B.: How else did they kill people?

E.Z.: Uh... I... I'm going back to Biezanaw now.

N.B.: Yes.

E.Z.: Some uh... someone told him to halt, I was walking with someone and he was told to halt, and he didn't halt, I did, and they killed him right next to me. They shot him and I s... s... stayed [frozen]. And... in... also in Biezanaw y... yes... yes. There are so many things that are... just coming back to me, you know, the working age was 15 to 35 years. So they came in the night and asked how old I was, and I said my true age, in the middle of the night. And this woman, who was fifty, she also said, they took us out, both of us, to the snow, and... they killed her next to me. And I thought they were going to kill me too, I said, that moment I said *Shema Israel*, and... and I stayed alive. They didn't kill me. I saw her in the snow... uh... her corpse. And she begged, she gave them her rings, she had some... nothing helped. They probably took her rings afterwards [sniff]. I've been... I've been present in numerous incidents.

N.B.: And you don't know why they didn't shoot you?

E.Z.: Now. That's it.

N.B.: Were these Germans or Ukrainians?

E.Z.: No, no, these were the Germans. The Germans. The Ukrainians just... guarded the place. The Germans ruled inside. So now uh... I stayed in Czestochowa, as I was saying, yes? And... and they took a lot of people, put them into railcars, one of them was also my uncle, who worked at the men's side, he... at an adjacent camp.

N.B.: Your uncle uh...

E.Z.: My uncle, my mother's brother. Whom I met, he was very tall, two meters tall.

N.B.: Did you meet him in Czestochowa or in Skarzysko?

E.Z.: I didn't... I didn't meet him, but uh... I saw him walking form afar, and I knew this was my uncle. And I lost him uh... on that last day, uh... they bombed it. We... I don't know whether it was the Germans who bombed these railcars or the Russians. But there's... there's no trace of these people. On the last day.

N.B.: The railcars that went out from Czestochowa?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: And when they left you with a group of people...

E.Z.: Yes. Then the Russians came.

N.B.: Did... did someone stay with you, some German, uh...

E.Z.: Uh... one German, in... *meister* Meier. He told me uh... "you deserve it, you deserve it." I had... I had no idea what he was talking about. What did I deserve? It was liberation. And he disappeared. He... I don't know what happened to him. Either he was killed by the Russians, or he escaped, I don't know. Anyway, I was there a few days with the Russians, they were Tartars, terrible people who... smelled of Vodka, and all. And they raped people. I was so uh... a shadow of... of... of a human being, that they had no reason even to... to touch me, but I... they ra... raped uh... women there. With terrible cruelty. Already after we've been liberated.

N.B.: You saw it?

E.Z.: I saw it. I saw and heard it. And then I decided, a few day later I decided I was going home. To Katowice.

N.B.: One moment, let's uh... liberation comes and the Russians arrive.

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: And... that causes some... change in your life, (E.Z.: Nothing), do you think?

E.Z.: Not the clothes. One slice of bread more. Yes. One more slice of bread and once a whole loaf of bread, still warm. Some Russian threw it at me, just like that, from his car, straight from the bakery, so I was almost... almost... killed by all the people who all threw themselves at me, and eventually I dropped the bread and said, "enough, let me live." And I didn't have any of it. Terrible cruelty, but it's small wonder. Everybody was hungry, and they lost their minds. This wasn't in... so I thought, I'm leaving Czestochowa and all, and I didn't tell anyone, and I went to the train station.

N.B.: You didn't tell anybody...

E.Z.: That I was leaving. That I was going.

N.B.: Was there anyone to tell it to?

E.Z.: No, uh... those who survived. I wasn't left all by myself, there...

N.B.: Did you have any relationships with any of the survivors?

E.Z.: Not relationships, but some [kind of contact]. There was this doctor from Krakow, and there was this other guy, and... I could've said something. I didn't say anything to anyone, so they wouldn't tell me, "Are you crazy, going all by yourself in this kind of weather, wait it out," or something like this. I didn't say anything, I went

to the tr... train station, and I waited for some two days, there came uh... a locomotive, with coal, the kind in which you throw coal into the... yes? And I couldn't climb on it, it was so high, I was weak, and then this, guy, who later turned out to be German, telling by his shoes, and he had turned his German coat inside out, so there were no buttons, he lowered himself, motioned me to hang on to his legs, his shoes, and he lifted me up onto... onto the coal, which was covered with snow. And he dropped me onto the... and we and a few others went together. It was freezing cold, I licked the snow, because there was nothing else to eat, until we arrived at a little station, and the driver stopped, he said, "we can't go any further, because the tracks are covered with snow, so this is the final stop."

N.B.: We need to change the cassette (E.Z.: Again?). We got to the station, we...

Tape Five

N.B.: ...snow.

E.Z.: Arriving at a little station, and the... the man driving the locomotive says, "there's no way back"... "we can't go any further, we're getting off here, last stop."

N.B.: What station was it?

E.Z.: Yanejiov. That's halfway between Czestochowa and Krakow. That's it, we get into this... little room, which was a train uh... station, which had one lamp hanging from the ceiling, and a lot of people, but not Jews. I knew they were all gentiles, because I saw that none of them wore camp clothes. Everybody was in... normal clothes.

N.B.: And you were wearing the ca... striped clothes [cough]?

E.Z.: I was wearing the number, and the scarf on my bald head, this uh... weirdo, but I was exhausted, and I looked for some corner to sit in, and I sat down like that for two days. I can tell it was two days because they turned the light off in the morning and again they turned it on in the evening, twice like this.

N.B.: Just a moment. Let's stop for a second, uh... {talks to cameraman}.

E.Z.: I sit down in the corner, so no one would move me, because it was full of people, and I sit like this for two days, without anything to eat or drink, totally exhausted. And people are drinking, buying themselves hot tea, and whatever, and me – nothing. No one turns to me, no one asks anything, they step on me, and I sit there like a rag. Suddenly, as if from heaven, [someone] moves the people aside, because it was very crowded, moved them aside... aside, a priest. He was a seminarian but I saw a... priest's brown uniform, so I thought... and he asks me in Polish, "why are you sitting like this?" I said, "I can't stand." "Have you eaten anything? Have you had anything to drink?" I said "No." So he disappeared for a few moments, and brought me a glass of tea. To this day, when I have, I have a cup, cup of tea, when I lift it I have tis recollection, the picture of that... that day, that moment, the first time after so many years I drank hot tea from a cup [cough]. I finish the tea and he disappears. Goes away. Comes back, I don't know, an hour later, with two slices of bread, huge ones, round Polish bread, with cheese inside, all wrapped in parchment paper, for years I hadn't heard this rustle of parchment paper [cough]. I unwrap it, and can't eat at all. I can't swallow the bread. Nor the cheese. My all throat aches when I try to swallow the bread. And I eat, and he comes back again, with another cup of tea, I put the bread in my lap, drink the tea, and cannot eat. I just cannot eat. Evening came, they lit the um... lamp, and then he... then he came, "listen, tomorrow morning we're heading out, and we have to walk for about four kilometers." So I tell him, "Alright, but I can't walk." Those shoes made my legs like solid logs. So he says, "get up", lifts me up, and I fall back down. My legs just couldn't carry me. So he takes me on his back, and carried me three or four kilometers in the deep snow, we went, stopped for a rest, and then started again. And then we talked. He asked me uh... after so many years in which I... I never answered with my name, just my number, it's a good thing

I even remembered it. So I tell him my name, and he says, “my name’s Karol Wojtyla.” Nothing, that name didn’t ring any bells, [he asks me] where are you from, and I tell him I’m from Katowice, and he says he’s from Wadowice, so I say to him, “Wadowice is next to my grandmother’s, next to Dziedgze, right?” [cough] and he tells me, “you return home, your mother and father will be waiting for you, but I am already an orphan.” He was then 25. [cough] So he told me why, his mother passed away when he was a little boy, his brother passed away, he was a doctor, his sister too, he was left with [only] his father. And [he said] that he had been in Russia, in ‘39 he ran away to Russia with his father, uh... and his father saw what was happening there, they went back to Krakow. And that’s it, actually. On our next stop, I told him a little about uh... about what had happened to me uh... and... he said, “well, I’m taking you now to my aunt’s, in Krakow, where there are lots of cats and pillows.” You can i... i... imagine what it’s like, it’s a kind of idyll, pillows, warmth, she-cats walking around, such a... different atmosphere, from the atmosphere out here in the snow. And I didn’t... didn’t say anything to that, I listened, and I imagined that I might actually be in such an atmosphere, even for... for... for a second. We arrive after a few stops on the way, arrive to a railcar that is waiting. This car, an acattle car, like the ones we were transported in, but open, some people are sitting in it, [cough] and waiting for a locomotive, to take this car. In the meantime he brings a... barrel of uh... uh... how’s that called? Uh... put... uh... you put it on rooftops, uh...

N.B.: Tar?

E.Z.: Tar. Empty. And he lights a fire inside. All those people, there were maybe 20 people who were sitting there, everyone comes and warm themselves, and he takes off his overcoat and puts it on me, and says, “eat the bread.” The bread was frozen. The bread from back at the station. [cough] It was frozen, and I ate it slowly crumb by crumb, and he went out for a moment, maybe to the bathroom, or something... and there’s this surreal family sitting in front of me, a grandfather, father, mother and child. All together, the girl maybe my age, with black braids, with two red ribbons, and I was bald and... I was in a terrible condition. Dirty, probably unimaginably stinking, and she had this pretty pink face, all normal. So the girl’s mother asks me, “Ty yevreika?” [Russian, “You Jewish?”] and I didn’t know what *yevreika* meant, and I didn’t make the connection between “Hebrew” and “*yevreika*”. I don’t know why. So I say, “excuse me?” So she says, “Ty zyduwka?” [Polish] You Jewish? I said, “Yes, can’t you tell by the number?” And... then she says, “Tell me, what’s that priest doing with you? Why did you go with him? Do you know what’s going to happen in the end? He’ll abduct you, put you in a nunnery, and your parents will never know where you are.” We are still waiting for the car (N.B.: The locomotive), and I’m starting to... sorry?

N.B.: The locomotive [cough].

E.Z.: The locomotive, and I’m starting to think that it might be... they... they... they took out some money, ten Zloty each, the grandmother and the father, and gave me 10 Zloty each, and told me, “Run away.” We get to Krakow, and I hide between uh... uh... some milk jugs, huge ones.

N.B.: How do you mean? How did you get off the railcar?

E.Z.: I got off together with him.

N.B.: He took you down?

E.Z.: Yes. Yes. Yes. It was high. And he went off again, to the bathroom or something, d... disappeared for a moment, and [told me to] wait there. I go behind those... [cough] those jugs, which were the same height as me, huge, I don't know if... you can imagine, very tall, four of those, and I hide behind them, and sit there, I mean, I crouched, and I heard him calling my name, Editha, my name is Edith, you say it... I hear his voice, and I stay there. It took half an hour, I got up, it was Sunday morning, why I remember it was Sunday, because all the church bells in Krakow were ringing. Also it was a cold day. And I was going down the street, in Belante [?], Belante is this boulevard, I thought, "where will I go? What will I do?" And as I'm walking, whom do I see? That woman who had us at her house with mother in '42. An angel sent from heaven. She is with her son, who was born, he was five, really small, and I say, "Pani Ceshum" [name, unintelligible]. She looks at me, she didn't recognize me right away, she leaves the child with her friend, and takes me to her home, takes all my clothes off, they were full of lice, burns them in the oven, washes me, gives me some of her clothes, this is uh... a new life is beginning. The child comes back home, I don't know what she told him, but she said, "I can't have you for very long, there's this village uh... a group Jews organizing, go over there." And I did go there, and from there I went to Katowice with th... this truck with Russian soldiers, whom I told I was a *yevraika*, by then I knew what it... how to say it, I'm a *yevraika*. I got to Katowice, uh... ran over to our house, there was no trace. We had left the apartment whole. Each took just a small suitcase. We left all the furniture. There was nothing left. The apartment was locked, my neighbors... our neighbors, from before, and were half Germans, told us that a high ranking German officer had lived in the apartment, for the duration of the war, since '39, and in '44, in December, this train for transporting the furniture uh... came, and he took it all to Germany. That's it. I go, again, to this Committee, like in Krakow... there is again one like it Katowice, and there... and there... I wait with all... people are starting to come in from Auschwitz, through Katowice, because it... trains bound abroad would all go through Katowice, it was a... very large train network, and I wait. Wait for mother, for father, for my sister, for... for someone. Nobody came. So uh...

N.B.: Where were you waiting in the meantime?

E.Z.: In the Committee, there was a home, I shared a bed there with this other girl, we slept there together, and we'd cook uh... I mean, the Committee would cook food for those who were coming from Auschwitz and all the camps, uh... they were Hungarians, Czechs, all... all kinds of people, and we'd register them, I learned to use a typewriter, and we'd write down the names and... everything, and meanwhile I'm waiting for father and mother.

N.B.: So, you were actually working for the Committee?

E.Z.: Yes, I wanted to... to do something. I'm working, and getting food, that is, we cook, so it... it is also a living.

N.B.: In the meanwhile, how many Jews uh... (E.Z.: Uh... they didn't come in there, there was no room for...) gathered in the Committee?

E.Z.: They just came to register themselves and dispersed.

N.B.: Did they disperse in the city, in Katowice?

E.Z.: Yes, they dispersed in the city, and they started to leave because... because... there is still a war going on. It is only uh... January. Uh... February, yes? And meanwhile my disease is starting to bother me, I get a high fever, go over to... this nuns' hospital, and they find that I have tuberculosis of the bones, and that I need immediate treatment, uh... x-rays and all, that is, I am sick. I stay in Katowice uh... for a short while, with some woman who came from Lwow, and thanks to me she manages to get an apartment, because I am originally from Katowice, thanks to me she gets an apartment.

N.B.: From whom?

E.Z.: From the Polish authorities. And she couldn't have gotten it [otherwise]. I got the apartment, [because] I didn't want to return to my [old] apartment, so we got that apartment.

N.B.: Could you return to your old apartment?

E.Z.: Maybe, but I didn't want to. What would I do with an apartment where there's not... not even a nail, nothing.

N.B.: Were you inside the apartment?

E.Z.: No. I just saw it from the neighbors' balcony. I looked... Completely bare walls. We had a painting, a Gotleib, which is driving me crazy to this day. It had a man... you know his paintings are surrealistic, Jewish, but a... a different kind of uh... Jewishness. A bearded Jewish man lighting Shabbath candles. Dark oil. That picture haunts me and I couldn't... I've looked in all kinds of collections in Kr... in Krakow, and it wasn't there [clears throat]. Anyway, I got this apartment, and that woman founded Poland's uh... historical committee. Ms. Masowska.

N.B.: What woman, the one who... (E.Z.: The one who...) came back from Lwow, and...

E.Z.: And wanted to adopt me.

N.B.: Uh... that's new, you didn't tell us, she wanted to adopt you?

E.Z.: She wanted to adopt me, after a while, she wanted to adopt me. She had lost her own child, she wanted to adopt me.

N.B.: You mean, she was an older woman?

E.Z.: Yes, older than I was, a very educated woman, a lawyer, but uh... I refused. Then they sent me to Zakopane.

N.B.: Wait a moment. Who sends you?

E.Z.: Uh... again, the Committee, the... Jews who were responsible for the... for the elderly and the people... to find arrangements for them, yes? In all kinds of places.

N.B.: For how long were you in Katowice?

E.Z.: In Katowice, I was from uh... February until November.

N.B.: In the meantime the war ends.

E.Z.: The war ends. I have to go back to something, in the beginning, in February, I've already met this woman, she is already taking care of me, looking after me, and I decide to write to my uncle, in Brazil. The father of the children. Because I collected stamps, I had his address in my head. It was really in my head, like, etched. Like a computer nowadays, yes?

N.B.: Where was it?

E.Z.: In Sao Paolo. I remembered the street, everything. Because I'd take the stamps together with the... with the sender's [address] (N.B.: Um hum), put them in the water, so the address stayed [in my head]. And in February I took a postcard, with Hitler, with a Hitler stamp, there was nothing else, the war hadn't ended yet, the Germans still uh... and I wrote to my uncle, addressed it to him, and told him that the children were with gentiles, and that I was going to go and look for them soon, and that father and mother and my aunt were gone and everyone was gone, and maybe he could look for them around the world through the Red Cross. It was... this woman, Ms. Masowska, and the chairman of the... Committee, they said, the girl's got a few screws loose. How could she remember the address, how can she... how can it get to... to Brazil, and all. I did my part, I sent my [laughs] load of troubles, and on the 8th of May, there comes the first telegram to Poland, from abroad, from my uncle. By this time he was in Braz... in Rio de Janeiro, but the woman where he used to live knew that he had a family, read it, or had it translated, I don't know, maybe she was Polish too, I don't know, she sent it to him in Rio, and he sends a telegram to Katowice. A... telegram with all the lines filled, like a letter, it said: "Don't worry, by now, several months later, you must all be together already, and I will do everything I can to help you", and that's it. And then I have his address, and I write to him, and meanwhile I also went to get the children from the peasant, who didn't want to give them to me, that peasant with whom I'd left the children.

N.B.: In Zakopane (E.Z.: Forty) In... in... (E.Z.: No, in Wieliczka) Excuse me, in Wieliczka.

E.Z.: In Wieliczka, they are wearing large golden crosses, they are blond, they look great, and they don't want to go with at all.

N.B.: Tell me about your meeting with them in general, how... how did you find them...

E.Z.: I came. I knew where... where I had left them. I came to that peasant, they didn't recognize me. My cousins didn't recognize me. First of all I looked... it was in February, when I came there, I had no hair yet, I looked uh... I weighed maybe thirty two kilos, they got really scared of me. And they didn't want to go, they ran inside and said no... no, no. So I went back to Krakow, told it to people in the Committee, and then they sent uh... Polish uh... soldiers uh... and they brought them.

N.B.: Who sent Polish soldiers?

E.Z.: The Pol... the Jewish Committee in Krakow, there was this... militia organized, call it that, a militia, do you know what a militia is? Uh... with rifles, and there was this Polish officer who came from Russia, and they went to Wieliczka...

N.B.: Was it organized by Jews or by the Polish authorities? Or you don't know?

E.Z.: One moment, what... what are you asking?

N.B.: Was it a Jewish operation?

E.Z.: Jewish. Yes. The Jews who took in the first refugees who started arriving.

N.B.: And was there... who gave them weapons? Who let them walk around with weapons?

E.Z.: Krakow was liberated already.

N.B.: Yes, but Jews (E.Z.: Krakow...), a group of Jews couldn't just (E.Z.: Why?), Jews...

E.Z.: Uh... in... in... the Russian army, there were a lot of Jews, like Ferber for example. And they were the first people to arrive.

N.B.: Were they J... Jews from Russia (E.Z.: Yes)? Russians?

E.Z.: I don't know, maybe they were Polish Jews, Poles who hadn't been in... in the camps, or maybe they had, they put them in uniforms and they gave them guns. Yes.

N.B.: Polish army uniforms? Uniforms...

E.Z.: Yes. Yes, g... green uniforms, yes uh... yes. And they, it was called a militia, it wasn't an army (N.B.: Ok), it was a militia, you understand the small difference?

N.B.: Yes, yes, I'm trying to clarify the source of authority this militia had.

E.Z.: Uh... look, there were all kinds of things, robberies and all, the militia guarded against those (N.B.: Hum), yes? And here too [in my case], they called them, said, I told them the children don't want to come, the gentile doesn't want to hand them

over, so they sent authority. They were led by an officer, and they brought the children back to... Krakow.

N.B.: Did you go with them?

E.Z.: No, I waited for them.

N.B.: Did the gentile... (E.Z.: I...) did the gentile know you?

E.Z.: The gentile knew me. Now, well, I'll repeat that.

N.B.: OK, but when you went to Wieliczka...

E.Z.: Yes, uh... he didn't recognize me.

N.B.: Oh, he didn't recognize you?

E.Z.: No, uh... I said, Edithka, that's how I was called, he said, "get out of here, get out of here", in a... in a... [strong] tone of voice.

N.B.: So did he know you or not?

E.Z.: Go know. But if I... he... he must've recognize me [and know] that I came for those children. So he... knew, maybe he didn't want to. I didn't start a mess over it, I said, I'm not... I'm... I'm too weak, and I can't fight [him] by myself, I need someone to come with me. That's it. I got to Wieliczka and I didn't... didn't go to him. I told them where he was, where they were, and that's all, we went back, and the children cried, they didn't want to leave, so I explained to them, "I have a letter here," oh, wait, I didn't have it yet. I... I told them, "I wrote a letter to your father." What father? Father who? They were utterly confused. Anyway, In Krakow they somehow came back to th... to themselves, they started going to school, and a few months later, in May, a letter came, uh... a telegram, so I went again... I was in Katowice, I went over to them, I told them, "Look, this is from father, it's a reply to a letter that I... to a postcard that I sent. And you have a father in Brazil who will look after you." That's it. And that's how it was. I decided that I would only hinder them if I stayed with them, since because of me they wouldn't be allowed to enter Brazil. There was then... you had to go through medical examinations, and I had open tuberculosis, it... it wasn't possible. And then I went to Zakopane, and they stayed in Krakow, went to school, and in '47 they went to Brazil.

N.B.: And did you stay in touch with them throughout the years?

E.Z.: Uh... I stayed in touch, but today our relationship isn't... isn't good, I don't want to say anything, because it might somehow reach... there is no contact.

N.B.: No contact. And you uh... went to Zakopane.

E.Z.: I went to Zakopane.

N.B.: Were you taken there?

E.Z.: Yes. In a truck. Some children, we went, from Krakow, and...

N.B.: All orphans, refugees?

E.Z.: Yes. All. All uh... were orphans. Here and there some father would suddenly appear, just back from Russia, sometimes there was some mother, who had been ill, and suddenly arrived and found her [child]... there were instances, like, recently, when I organized the get-together, that is, I organized this get-together, so there were incidents, like one woman from the U.S. told me, "don't you remember that father came to get me and I didn't want to go? But today I'm happy that he did." In '47' she was already in Detroit. That's it, here I'm very happy.

N.B.: In Zakopane?

E.Z.: In Zakopane. First of all, I met Lena, who was an... extraordinary person, and... also, everybody were orphans.

N.B.: Just a moment, what made Lena an extraordinary person?

E.Z.: She radiated personality. She radiated maternal [warmth], although she didn't have children. She radiated uh... warmth, and she treated each child individually. Later she learnt that I was from Wieliczka, then we became even closer. Maybe we were close because she knew I was very sick, and... my chances of survival were slim. So she was very, very, very... to Nathan, Nathan Szecht, who was handicapped, and to me, she was very dedicated. Very dedicated. It was thanks to her, you can say that, maybe it was from God, if you believe in him, but she uh... was the one who gave me hope and moral support. That's it. And then we...

N.B.: How was it in Zakopane?

E.Z.: How was it in Zakopane. [coughs] Zakopane was uh... Lena was uh... you can't say she was his disciple, but she was in favor of the Korczak educational system. And she uh... ran the home according to Korzhack's method. We had our own parliament, there were judges, there uh... lawyers, all the roles were filled by the children, for the children. Yes, and we studied in the home. Everybody studied uh... in the home, we had teachers, and we studied in the home, because at school, to which a few children were sent, there was terrible anti-Semitism.

N.B.: The local Polish school?

E.Z.: Polish. Yes. So the children came back, and studied in the home. And... I wanted to go to high school, to skip over, because I had learned a little in Wieliczka, and I said, "I'm going to high school, I'm not going to elementary school now."

N.B.: High school, you mean tenth grade?

E.Z.: It's tenth, it's tenth. And a few of us went, uh... girls, uh... three girls uh... and... six boys, the boys were very good at math and physics, I took languages, English, and... mythology, and algebra, and things like that which were easier, I had a

C in... calculus, in... geometry, it didn't go so well. But I was there only for November, December, January and February, after which we went away, left Poland. Ferber might have told it in his interview, maybe you know, there were anti-Semitic attacks on the home, they wanted to kill the Jewish children, and... Lena decided that she would escape abroad with the whole home.

N.B.: Wait, wait, wait, wait. [to cameraman] Stop for a second.

[interruptions]

N.B.: Uh... you were saying that there were attacks on the home.

E.Z.: Yes?

N.B.: What happened?

E.Z.: Uh... they were called the Endeks, uh... yes? You've heard. They j... just raided the home with rifles, uh... and the home uh... resisted, that is uh... Ferber, together with boys who had been with the partisans, like Szecht, uh... took up guns, they uh... had organized guns, and it was a real war uh... between them and the home and the Endeks. And then Lena on the spot made a decision, without informing the Bund in... Warsaw, who were against, against the children leaving, there were both Communists and Bundists, she doesn't inform them, and we prepare to leave uh... Poland.

N.B.: Excuse me. Uh... was someone hurt in the Endek attack?

E.Z.: Yes, children were wounded.

N.B.: Wounded.

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: By the shots.

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: And did the resistance succeed uh... in... in making the Endeks flee?

E.Z.: Uh... Lena went... went to the police in Zakopane, and they said uh... that they'd take care of it, that it won't happen again, but it had already happened once and she thought... "I'm not going to keep the children here and have them killed when the war is already over."

N.B.: Yes, uh... I mean, when the Endeks raided the house (E.Z.: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes), you said that a... defense, a self defense was organized, by Ferber and... (E.Z.: Yes, Szecht and...) and did they make the Endeks flee?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: They made them flee.

E.Z.: Yes. The dogs, Ferber said that we should... uh... [coughs] uh... send... send the dogs at them, there were some dogs in the home, that guarded it (N.B.: Um), and that's all, and...

N.B.: Now the... the home in Zakopane uh... was it uh... organized by the Bund?

E.Z.: No. Of course not.

N.B.: So by whom?

E.Z.: We received the house, it was the house of a Jew who had a guesthouse there before the war, and he donated it to us.

N.B.: He donated it?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: And who organized this whole group?

E.Z.: Lena did.

N.B.: Who funded it?

E.Z.: Maybe in... the Bund, maybe the Bund, maybe the newly founded government and... maybe the Jewish Committee which started in Warsaw and Krakow. Yes. And they took care of... the army, we'd get food, rice, uh... from the Polish army, it was November already, yes? And cooked, and prepared food, bought vegetables, and... it wasn't plentiful, but they weren't hungry. The children.

N.B.: Was there a teaching staff beside Lena?

E.Z.: Yes, yes. Yes. There were these two professors, she was a well known... bacteriologist, who had worked for Mengele, uh... Mrs. Zeeman, and her husband who was uh... a professor of... Semitic languages, Hebrew included, and he'd teach us Hebrew, there was this biologist who taught biology, or botany, this kind of stuff, uh... there was a gymnastics teacher, uh... and there... there were a few ladies in the kitchen, who had children, who had joined... the home in Zakopane, uh... to help with... the cooking, in return for their children staying in the home. We were a hundred people.

N.B.: Now I'd like to ask you, look, we're talking about February, it's February already (E.Z.: '46, yes) '46. In February of '45, in Katowice, in Katowice (E.Z.: Yes), your illness was discovered.

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: A whole year (E.Z.: Yes), what treatment were you getting?

E.Z.: I was getting treatment, medications, my temperature would be measured, uh... my illness was in a low... phase, but it was there. I was checked regularly, and I'd get a fever once in a while, but I somehow managed. It was on the back burner, as they say, yes? Uh... there came out, uh... liquids would come out of uh... my ribs, um... pus, but the... the... the nurse would take care of it. And... then we decide to go, that is, Lena decides, a trip... it was supposedly a field trip, supposedly a field trip, but just before it she found out about five Jewish children from Warsaw who were in a monastery in Zakopane. So she went over there, with two bags uh... of flour and sugar, and got the children out, they joined us (N.B.: Did they want to?). Children who'd been born in '41-'42, five three year olds, two girls and three boys.

Tape Six

N.B.: ...kidnapping a few more children from the monastery.

E.Z.: Yes. Now, there are no uh... papers for these children, they don't even have names, they have no names. There were Wetak, Wojtek, Pedro, but these were all given to them in the monastery. There are no last names and no nothing. And we...

N.B.: In the monastery uh...

E.Z.: The Polish monastery in Zakopane.

N.B.: And...

E.Z.: We were there now, in Urszlanki.

N.B.: And did the monastery have any problem handing them over?

E.Z.: Uh... they wanted to get rid of them...

N.B.: For sugar and flour and...

E.Z.: Yes. And candy [giggle]. Uh... and... the children don't talk, nothing, they were secluded there, sat dirty.

N.B.: Little children.

E.Z.: Yes, yes. Each one of us, the older kids, took upon ourselves one of the five. I took a boy who is today a medical doctor in Detroit, uhm... uh... and grew very attached to him, very attached to him.

N.B.: What's his name?

E.Z.: Witek. That's all, no last name. And an... American family adopted him, uh... Emma Schaber, the famous Yiddish singer, who came to Paris and... took him. Yes. The rest of them came here to Israel, two have passed away, the two girls have passed away, uh... I'll get to that, I'll tell (N.B.: Ok, alright). And... that's it, we get to the Czech border.

N.B.: As if this was a trip where?

E.Z.: A trip to Morskie Oko, you've heard of it, have you?

N.B.: But Morskie Oko is in Poland.

E.Z.: Yes, uh... it was a trip, we made sandwiches, a few of the older kids knew, but the rest didn't know anything because Lena was really afraid that they would find out in Warsaw, and the lady, my legal guardian from Katowice didn't know anything either.

N.B.: Was she still in Katowice?

E.Z.: She was in Katowice, and I kept contact with her, but I didn't tell her anything.

N.B.: How was contact kept, in letters?

E.Z.: Letters, yes. Phone calls, even. Uh... I don't tell her anything, and we get to the Czech border, and then there are problems, uh... too many... too few passports, too many children, my passport belonged to some Hungarian nine year old girl, it's not... not in my name, because I was among the last to join this... this trip, uh... and... I have... I have this boy, who is now a doctor... in my backpack, and he wet it, and got (N.B.: On your back)... on my back, he wet it and got a shot, uh... not a shot, but a tranquilizing pill, so he'd sleep, and when we were boarding the... the train, after Lena had paid [a bribe] at the border crossing so they wouldn't bother us, uh... this kid pees inside my backpack, and the... policeman... from the border guard walks over to me, and says to me in Czech, "Your... lemonade's unscrewed." It... had he touched it, [he'd know] it was a child. Anyway, I told this to Lena, out of my diary, so she wrote it in her book as an anecdote. And we get to Prague, Czechia, uh... some of the older kids, who weren't assigned to younger children, uh... went to live somewhere else, and we are taken in... taken into a monastery, a nunnery near the Karl bridge. It is really, today it's a ruin, I've been there. White beds, plenty of milk [for] all the little... all the little ones, and Ferber uh... Joseph also looks after the uh... children, and watches over us, uh... I think, a beautiful life, a little sightseeing, I mean, I didn't get to see as much of Prague as the others did, because I was assigned to that boy, but I saw a little of the old Synagogue, and the Altneustad, the bridge, all kinds of things. And then Agudath Isra... Agudath uh... Agudath Israel, who were very devout, Hungarians, were there by then, and they organize for us luxurious buses for that time, and we start to wander from Prague, through Germany, through Nuremberg, which was completely ruined, onwards, to Strasbourg. And in Strasbourg we lived in a hotel, which was ready for us, those *Dos's* [a negative designation for devout, orthodox Jews] must have prepared it for us, uh... it was called Maison Rouge, uh... Red house, the first time for all the children that they met with a... Bidet, and all kinds things that they'd never seen before, uh... the children were a little rowdy there, they jumped about, broke things, but we were only here for a few days...

N.B.: By children, you mean the little children?

E.Z.: No, th... there was group of children aged uh... seven, eight, nine, they were. And... we went on, to Bal... to Barbizon. Barbizon was a town, we were there also just now, a beautiful town of artists uh... painters, it's next to Fontainebleau, and it was already Passover. Passover of '46. And the people, those who had us, started to uh... brainwash the boys, and... us too, we dressed modestly, long sleeves, long socks, the boys were... praying all day, and these were boys who had hidden with Aryan papers, who didn't know anything about Judaism, and were suddenly made to be so very devout, with cupolas on their heads, it was really uh... and the older kids organized and said, "We're not staying here." And then Lena went to Paris, and... Leon Bloom, who was then foreign minister, in Paris, arranged another place for us, um... a palace

of uh... one of Napoleon's estates, which was empty then, very decayed, and truck came at night, and we ran away from Barbizon, all of us.

N.B.: Wasn't Leon Bloom uh... Prime Minister then?

E.Z.: Either Prime or Foreign Minister. I can't...

N.B.: I think he was Prime Minister.

E.Z.: Anyway, a man with... authority.

N.B.: So he got you a different place (E.Z.: Yes yes yes) instead of... the place which the Hungarians...

E.Z.: I don't know, Hungarians, uh... they were very...

N.B.: Those orthodox Jews?

E.Z.: Very devout orthodox Jews. Yes. And then we arrived, started to fix the house and the garden and... started to live well, in Combeu, that's how the place was called.

N.B.: Where was it that Boder interviewed you?

E.Z.: Bellevue.

N.B.: Later.

E.Z.: Later, in our second house, yes.

N.B.: Ok.

E.Z.: Um... there I... I was starting to get very sick, in Combot, I...

N.B.: Were you in contact with the... lady in Katowice, with the woman in Katowice?

E.Z.: Nothing.

N.B.: Not at all.

E.Z.: Until I got to Bellevue. Then I wrote to her. Uh... because I was afraid she'd come and take me back. Uh... I was hospitalized by then, it hadn't come to surgery yet, but it did a little later, uh... when we got to Bellevue uh... after I'd given the interview in that cassette in September, in November I was already hospitalized, I was already hospitalized, and... I stayed in the hospital for three months.

N.B.: And during that whole trip from Zakopane, what was Lena Kichler telling you actually, where were you going?

E.Z.: To Palestine.

N.B.: To Palestine.

E.Z.: Yes, that was our destination. Palestine.

N.B.: Did she tell you that in Zakopane?

E.Z.: Yes. Yes yes. She was a Zionist, and we were going to Palestine, and everybody was ecstatic about it. And in Bellevue uh... yes, we went to Bellevue, again, it was this tiny palace, which we'd received, we fixed it, with great uh... energy, especially the boys, uh... we received beds for the young children, and we painted them, uh... it was this family project, uh... for a new house. Uh... and that's it, and... then I didn't get to go home too often, just for vacation, because I was in a cast, after having had three ribs removed, one at a time, and I came home wearing a cast, and then uh... I got this summons to a... sanatorium, the result of the French social services' taking care of me. And I went to the Pyreneans, about a thousand kilometers from Paris, on the border of Spain. Alone. To a children's sanatorium... actually, it belonged to the French Ministry of Defense. For officers, for children of French officers. I was the only Jew there, but no one knew it, except for the manager, everyone would call me "La Polonaise", "The Polish Girl." They didn't know I was Jewish, and I pretended, for all the years I was there. But I wouldn't write on Saturday, and I'd fast in Yom Kippur, and... that's it. The... sanatorium's manager, Dr. Trifin, he knew I was Jewish, and that my parents died, he knew, he said, "You don't have to tell anyone, it's enough that I know it." A very dear man, whom I stayed in contact with for years. Only I did, others didn't.

N.B.: Whom do you mean by others?

E.Z.: There were '400... '400 youth in that sanatorium, and I had contact with him, later when I left the sanatorium, but also before, I'd come to his office every day, it was my moral therapy. He also treated as a... doctor, and after two and a half years I left the sanatorium.

N.B.: How was... whom did you stay in contact with during those two years?

E.Z.: With the home. I had contact with it.

N.B.: What do you mean by the home?

E.Z.: With Bellevue.

N.B.: They were in Bellevue the whole time?

E.Z.: They were... they were in Bellevue, yes, in '48' they came to Israel, I came back by then, I came... I came back for vacation, that's the way it was, I came back for vacation, and then... I found a letter that Lena sent me to... there, to Pormo, it was in Polish, it read: "Edithka, I must tell you that we are going to Israel but you have to stay here for now."

N.B.: How was it dated?

E.Z.: Uh... '48', early '48'. But they went only after, uh... after... after the state was founded, I think, they came to Israel in September. September, October, something like that. And then I really... again, what was I going to do, alone in France.

N.B.: But you were alone that whole time.

E.Z.: Alright, but I thought that I was going to come home and then we'd go to Israel. But suddenly the whole home went, some of the kids, Nathan, and a few of the older ones, went with the Exodus. Because they... they couldn't wait any longer, and they went with the Exodus and made the whole voyage back and forth with the Exodus, as you know, and arrived around '49', arrived in Israel. That's it. From Germany and back, you know the story.

N.B.: Yes.

E.Z.: And I went back to France, to Paris, to a home uh... for Jewish French youth.

N.B.: You mean, when you got out of the sanatorium?

E.Z.: Yes yes. But it was arranged by Lena. And here there were children whose parents died in the holocaust, French, but they hadn't been in the camps themselves, um... before that I met uh... Shaul Friedlander, the historian, who'd come from a... monastery.

N.B.: Where did you meet him?

E.Z.: In Combeu. And again, because we could communicate in German, I was the one who talked to him, but he came to Israel a short time after that. He had a family here, an uncle or something. And that's it, in France I started to study uh... to be a teeth technician.

N.B.: I take it that you spoke excellent French by then.

E.Z.: I spoke French, I got my baccalaureate there. In France.

N.B.: And were you in contact with the lady in Katowice?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: What was her name again?

E.Z.: Masowska.

N.B.: You didn't tell me her first name.

E.Z.: Uh... Risha.

N.B.: Risha.

E.Z.: Yenina Risha Masowska.

N.B.: What kind of relationship did you have?

E.Z.: Uh... we exchanged letters, uh... uh... she was a little angry with me but I explained to her that I didn't want to... become a burden to her with... with my illness, and that I thought that the treatment I got in France was better, and... which it was, and that's it... afterwards she came to Israel. After I did, yes.

N.B.: And you met again.

E.Z.: Here, yes, in Israel. She's not with us anymore. Since 99' [sob]. Uh... and that's it, I studied, and I'd go to the Pyreneans, the doc... the doctor would invite me there in vacations, and I had this family who supported me, an American family uh... from Texas, a kind of foster parents, uh... these adopting parents who actually paid for my treatment in the Pyreneans, all the expenses, it cost a fortune, they'd send me tick... money for tickets to the Pyreneans, and I'd spend my vacations at the Pyreneans. The doctor invited me, yes? I had two such vacations, and from there, from the room I shared with some Christian girls, I have relationships which last to this day. I stay in contact with the Christian girls who were with me in the sanatorium (N.B.: In the Sanatorium) to this day. I'm going to see them in two weeks in France. Um... and that's it...

N.B.: Who arrange for you that American family who supported you?

E.Z.: Uh... um... Lena sent uh... uh... a let... each of us wrote a summary of his life, I wrote it in English, the rest wrote in Yiddish, those who could write, Ro... Rozia Melzak, she couldn't write, I wrote it for her.

N.B.: Where did you learn English?

E.Z.: Me? I learned in... in school, in Poland, for a Few months, I started to read, and... learned. In... the Pyreneans I learned Spanish and English, and French, I... Be... I have an easy... time learning languages. I wrote Meljek's letter for her, and she was a beautiful girl, and there immediately appeared several families who wanted to adopt her, but she was really crazy. A seriously disturbed girl. Uh... and I, I got those foster parents in Texas, Dallas, a very po... wealthy family, the Zales, and they supported me.

N.B.: They chose you by your life story.

E.Z.: Yes, and my picture. They supported me un... until I got married, really. They supported me Continuously.

N.B.: Did they know you, did they meet you?

E.Z.: They came to Paris. They came to Paris and met me, yes. And they wanted to take me to Texas, but I didn't want to. Um... and that's it, I... before I came to Israel, there was this other family form Switzerland who wanted to adopt me, they invited me to Switzerland, I spent three months in '49' in Switzerland, and another three in 50, and in 51 I came to Israel.

N.B.: How did you get there?

E.Z.: On a ship, by myself. From Marseilles.

N.B.: Who arranged it?

E.Z.: The Jewish Agency. They got me a ticket and I arrived... arrived here all by myself, called Lena, who was here already, and... I met my boyfriend, my future husband, and... that's it, I lived in Haifa, and I had a problem with uh... housing. I had nowhere to live. They wanted to send me to this Kibbutz but I already had a job in laboratory in Haifa, so I went to the mayor, who was then Aba Hushi, told him my story, and that I'd like to live in Beith Haluzot, he calls... his wife, Ha... Hanna Hushi, and then they gladly welcomed me in Beith Haluzot, I lived there for a year, and then we got married. And I've stayed [giggle] to this day with my boyfriend, who is actually a distant relative, born in Vienna, our... our grandfathers were cousins. And we have the same last name. That's it. and we have a family together, I have two children, a '47 year old daughter and a '45 year old son, five grandchildren, and we live happily. In for... in 59', no, in 89' I went uh... in 78', I must say this, in 78' I was reading Primach, and I saw a big picture of Karol Wojtyla, who was soon to be appointed the Pope, and I fainted. I really fainted. I've never fainted in my life, and there I fainted. It took some time until I came to, and I was alone at home, and when I did I immediately said, "He helped an orphan, and he deserves it, that's it." In eigh.... I went over there in 89', before then I didn't dare, we didn't have diplomatic relations with the Vatican, I thought it might hurt him, I can't really uh... but my conscience was so... so heavy for not having thanked him, uh... and for running away like this, and it really weighed on me. And in 89' I wrote him the first letter from Poland, and didn't get a reply, and later, two years later, I wrote another one, and didn't get a reply, I said, that's enough [sob]. Uh... In Ein Hod, where I've been making ceramics for twenty years, there's a... a journalist, who was very uh... intrigued by my story, and he said, Edith, we can't leave it like this, we have to publish this. So I told him, "look, so long as there is no reply from the Vatican, there's no basis for it, it's not uh... we need some kind of basis for it." And I sat down and wrote, to the holy father, I wrote five... five pages uh... in polish, I told uh... the whole... our whole story together, that we had, and I got a reply. That... In 97'. In his handwriting, it said thank you for the letter, and... then I came over to him and said, "you know what, now I can tell you the story."

N.B.: To the journalist.

E.Z.: To the journalist. And it was supposed to appear in the Kolbo, we have... Kolbo, it's a paper that comes together with Ha'aretz in Haifa.

N.B.: With Ha'aretz?

E.Z.: With Ha'aretz. In Haifa. It's a local newspaper. T...

N.B.: Um hum.

E.Z.: And my picture appeared in the newspaper, a picture I'd gotten from someone on Australia, taken in '45, and a picture of the Pope. And it was a three page story, my whole story, but the day before it was published, it was supposed to appear on Friday, I get a phone call from an Italian journalist from Couriera de la Sierra, and says he wants to interview me in French. And I gave him a '45 minute telephone interview, and it was published in Italy even before it was published here. In... in... Rome. Two days later I got a phone call from the Italian television in Rome, who invited me to Rome, it was in March, and I was invited to Rome, they paid for everything, but there's no plan for me to eve... meet the Pope. In the television uh... there appeared uh... a man from the Vatican, in audition, I mean, uh... and says in Italian uh... that... its' true, that the Pope was in that place at that time, and showed pictures of the Pope as a boy... as a boy, as a student, shown for the first time in Italian television since he became Pope. I and... that's it, and... I came out, and... he spoke in Italian. For me there was a translator from French to Italian. When the... when the audition had ended, and he was waiting for me, the... man from the Vatican, he was very nice, he was called Dgovane De' Arqola, he spoke to me in beautiful French, hu... hugged me and kissed me, in my husband's presence [laughs], and asked me, "Would you like to meet the Pope?" So, in Israel they told me it was impossible, I turned to all kinds of people in Jerusalem, they said it was impossible to arrange. So he agve me his phone number, his cell phone, and says, "keep in touch." I thought to myself, I'm so close yet so far away. Anyway uh... the day before my flight back I called him, and he said, come over, there are 25 thousand people in the plaza in front of the Vatican, the Pope is talking, and he'll be talking for another two hours, if you're here you'll meet him. Well, and I came there, and... there were some dozen people who were waiting for him, waiting for his bless... (N.B.: Blessing) bless... blessing, and I was the only woman there, I stood, I thought, I'm not gonna kneel, I'm not gonna kiss his ring, I'm standing, and he got to me, and I said to him in Polish, all the others spoke in Italian, I told him that I had come from Israel specifically to thank him personally. So he said, "Can you repeat that, can you say that again, my hearing isn't so good anymore, I'm an oldie already." So I repeated it, and he laid his hand on me, which he didn't do for any other woman, and blessed me with some prayer. That's it. And I was very happy for having resolved that, and went back to Israel.

N.B.: Did he remember?

E.Z.: He uh... of course he remembered. Also, he'd read it, all the press was filled with my story for seven days, the whole press was filled with me, with my story and my picture. The Republica, and Couriera de la Sierra, and all the newspapers.

N.B.: Did he say anything about the incident itself?

E.Z.: Yes, he... he told me, "*Djachko*", uh... "Child, come again." I didn't come, because I thought to myself, I've resolved that matter, I don't need a second time, but it so happened that he came to Israel, and I was invited, and the list of invitees to that event was very long, to the meal, among all the others, I was chosen as well. So it... and it came straight from the Vatican, the... and... they took the list over there, and there they... the cardinals, I don't know who, decided, and we met here. Were you here when that happened?

N.B.: ...

E.Z.: Yes?

N.B.: I was here, I wasn't in...

E.Z.: No no, in... this television?

N.B.: Yes.

E.Z.: The meeting was very moving. I cried that time. In the Vatican I didn't cry, in the meeting here I did.

N.B.: Karol Wojtyla was actually one in a long chain of people, each of whom, in his own time and place, helped you out.

E.Z.: Yes, that's right. I was passed from one hand to the next, as if they really passed me from... from... one benefactor to the next. There was Lena, then I went to the Pyreneans and there was that doctor, it... it was a very personal and paternal treatment, that... that I can't forget.

N.B.: What... did you tell me his name? I can't remember.

E.Z.: Yes, Jean Trifin, Dr. Jean Trifin. We stay in touch by mail.

N.B.: So, if we try to count them all, it starts from that Jewish officer, the doctor Lwow?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: Right?

E.Z.: Right.

N.B.: And afterwards Brill in Krakow.

E.Z.: Uh... yes [cough]. Yes. And the Germans, the Germans in... really, helped me too. They helped me a lot with that food, they supported me with food all the time, and... and... and... stuff, and... after, right when I got out of the camp, but uh... I must say this, everyone whom I've told about my going with the priest asked me, even Lena, she said, "Why did you go with a priest? Why didn't... didn... How come you weren't afraid?" I said, "Nobody helped me, nobody offered me anything. He was the first person who offered, so I went with him." I must've been so desperate that I went without thinking, priest or no, it didn't matter, I came with him, but uh... a lot of people have asked, why did you go with a priest.

N.B.: But you were afraid, you ran away eventually.

E.Z.: I ran, but if it wasn't for those people I don't know if I would've.

N.B.: Did they scare you?

E.Z.: Yes. They just opened my eyes a little.

N.B.: Who were they?

E.Z.: Jews (N.B.: Jews...). They were Jews who had been in hiding. You could see, uh... they showed no sign of distress. Uh... they looked all normal.

N.B.: They spoke to you in Russian at first.

E.Z.: No, they spoke in... they... they...

N.B.: "*Ti Yevreie*".

E.Z.: No, they... if I... the... uh... *Yevraika*.

N.B.: *Yevraika* is Russian.

E.Z.: Yes, alright, so maybe they came from Russia, but I don't think so, that was before people started coming from Russia. In '41 they hadn't started coming from Russia yet.

N.B.: Not '41 (E.Z.: Uh... Uh...), forty... forty... (E.Z.: '45) five.

E.Z.: Early '45, uh... January. Yes. January 28th. So uh... (N.B.: Could be) that's it. That's it. That's my story.

N.B.: Um... and how did you tell it to your family?

E.Z.: You mean Karol Voj...

N.B.: The story, your story.

E.Z.: Karol Wojtyla? No?

N.B.: No, the story, this whole story.

E.Z.: The story uh... I uh... I told that I gave them all kinds of small... uh... anecdotes, all kinds of incidents, and all kinds of things, and eventually I started, I give a lot of lectures about this story in schools, so uh... so my children have been present, my grandchildren have been present, uh... and... that's it. And later Spielberg made a film.

N.B.: But you said that... you passed it to them in a light way.

E.Z.: Yes. I didn't want to tell them about the horrors, which you've heard here, uh... uh... I didn't tell everything, and now I must Tell me, as a kind of conclusion, that two years ago, when we went to Poland to shoot the film about Lena Kichler, we filmed in Zakopane, in the monastery where the children were, we took with us one of

those children, who is sixty today, sixty one (N.B.: Who? What's his name?). The children, those five who...

N.B.: What's his name?

E.Z.: Uh... Yosi Laor. He got his name here. Uh... we took him to uh... so that he'll remember, and so that he'll have, how can I explain, so that he'll know where he came from, where he was. He's lived all these years as if he was stuck in mid air. Uh... and... we got to that monastery, and there was a guy there, who wasn't three years old back then, but eight or nine, but not a Jew. And he remembered the whole story. And he told the whole story, and he took this Israeli Yosi in his hand, and walked with him all the way they'd go to church every morning, and something, something was sparked inside him. Something, something was resolved for him, this Yosi. Today he's a little more self assured. Even though he's a pilot, not in the air force but a pilot. Uh... a talented guy, but very introverted, with a very low self esteem, and... when we were in Warsaw, in the museum uh... uh... uh... how do you call it? The... the big museum, where all the collection is, history, no no no...

N.B.: There are several museums in Warsaw.

E.Z.: No no. The big museum where the entire holocaust collection is, with all the documents. Uh... how is it called?

N.B.: The Z.I.H.?

E.Z.: Z.I.H. Yes. Yes. So we looked in the pa... pa... paperwork, and each of us found himself. Because in '45 we'd all given testimonies and been photographed, and told our life stories, and uh... there were some psychologists who examined the children, what their future was, what they were gifted at, uh... what their IQ was, and it was all entered into these rubrics, we couldn't find him, because we'd taken him on the last moment before we left. And he said, "Edith, look for me!" I said, "there's nowhere to look." And I was so... I wanted so much... to be walking in the streets of Warsaw, I imagined, that I was walking in the streets of Warsaw, and some handsome man, that I'd see some man with a familiar face, and I'll walk up to him and Tell me, "Tell me, didn't you have a child in '42?" I didn't find him. It was a nigh... a... that trip was very very very hard for me, when we got to Wieliczka we went to Lena's house, because it's a film about her, she has a daughter, Lena, who was born here in Israel, she lives in the U.S., she came from the U.S. to... to... to Warsaw with us, I showed her all the places, because I was the only one who knew about her grandfather's house. It was hard for me to remember it, too. Yes? And also, in Krakow, the producer found, among 120 different hotels in Krakow the Hotel Polonia, where we stayed before the war. My uncle's hotel. The same hotel, and when I saw it and went in, I had this flashback, I saw my whole family, me, young, with braids, my sister, father and everyone. As if we were walking in. I started crying so hard, and screaming so hysterically, and nobody knew why. So I told them. In... in 39', fate has brought me here again, but alone this time. That was hard.

Tape Seven

N.B.: ...running? Ok. Uh... (E.Z.: Yes) Edith, I'm going back to the interview with Boder for a Moment.

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: Uh... during the time when your sister uh... was in Wieliczka, I take it (E.Z.: Yes), at some peasant's house (E.Z.: Yes), and your father was in a camp in... (E.Z.: Biezanaw) Biezanaw, and there was probably some difficulty, you had to keep your sister at that (E.Z.: Yes yes) peasant's house and you had to pay. And I take it that you went to work in Krakow.

E.Z.: I got some money in Krakow.

N.B.: How did you get money?

E.Z.: Um... the Brills told my story uh... to other good people...

N.B.: The Brills lived in the ghetto, right?

E.Z.: In the ghetto, yes.

N.B.: You came back to them in the ghetto.

E.Z.: Yes. And... I got a little money here, a little there, I worked a little in... for some families, in cleaning, got some money, but also, in Wieliczka, I went to that woman, uh... for the candlesticks, where mother had left the candlesticks, and sold them in Wieliczka, and went to... to... to pay for my sister.

N.B.: How long was your sister at (E.Z.: Twice...) that Pole's house (E.Z.: Sorry?). How long was you sister at that Pole's house (E.Z.: Uh...)?

E.Z.: Four or five months, four months. Four months.

N.B.: Do you remember how much you had to pay for her?

E.Z.: I don't know, I don't... I was... no. They didn't say how much, they said that... that they needed money for her. The one whom I left my cousins with, he... he didn't ask for money. He said that... he'll adopt them and there was no need for money. For my sister I had to pay. But I only made two payments, afterwards I couldn't... afterwards she came over. That's it. I can't remember the amount. I brought some money. I remember myself going uh... by train uh... wearing this big blue Polish shawl, going to them, coming over to them, he gave me something to eat, that peasant whom my sister was with, I ate there, I drank there, and the next morning I went again uh... followed the train tracks back to the camp. Biezanaw. Until my sister came, and... we went to Plahow, on the fateful night.

N.B.: There was this incident when you and your sister were thrown over the Fence. Do you remember that?

E.Z.: That I told about? No, whe... (N.B.: Yes yes) whe... but where?

N.B.: That told uh... (E.Z.: Boder?) Boder, yes, that you were thrown over the Fence. Do you remember that?

E.Z.: No. me and my sister, no. I took her behind the Fence, I took her into the... camp. But that I was thrown, no. No. Maybe he added something, wanted to... but it isn't... isn't in the cassette. I've heard the tape (N.B.: Yes?). It doesn't say anything like that.

N.B.: So maybe I've got some things mixed up.

E.Z.: I think so. No... the only camp we were in together was Plaszow, and it... it... everything was elec... electrified, you'd get electrified uh... uh... standing a meter and a half away form the Fence.

N.B.: Um... actually you haven't said much about Plaszow, except that you worked in a sewing workshop.

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: Um... but you haven't told us about things that you saw in the camp.

E.Z.: There were horrors there, too.

N.B.: What did you see in the camp?

E.Z.: It... first of all, it was a cemetery, all of Plaszow, the whole camp, was built on a... cemetery. Krakow's cemetery. It was full of tombstones. They built the camp on top of that. There was this deep valley there, and Gett, the m... manager of... of Plaszow, he had this hobby, of putting people on the hill next to it and shooting them. And I uh... saw it happen more than once. People were shot, and they'd fall into that valley, and during the time I was there, the valley filled up with corpses.

N.B.: And did you see Gett shoot, or...

E.Z.: Yes, Gett. Just him, on a white horse. A handsome, beautiful man. And he'd get in the horse... it was his hobby. They'd put some people up there, for the smallest... stealing a piece of bread, or doing something rude, or something, they'd put them up, and he'd shoot, he'd shoot the people form up on the horse and they'd fall in. That was actually the first time that... in '42, that they were killing people like that.

N.B.: And did you see that often?

E.Z.: I saw it, when we stood in the *Appel*, and then he... they'd pick people out in the *Appel*, and... you know what an *Appel* is, right?

N.B.: Every morning?

E.Z.: Yes, every morning, before work.

N.B.: He'd shoot people every morning?

E.Z.: I don't know if every morning, don't know if every morning, but... I saw it several times. Maybe it happened at other times of the day too, but I saw it in the morning. Because I was busy for twelve hours, I couldn't... I couldn't see the uh... and I'd come back and... or at night, if I went to work at night then there'd be an *Appel* in the evening, we'd go... we'd go to work and come back in the morning. One week night shifts, one week day shifts.

N.B.: What else did you see in Plaszow?

E.Z.: I didn't see much else, I didn't see much else. People who were tired, Tell me, in the sewing workshop, uh... at the sewing machine, if someone's... head would drop, they'd kill them too.

N.B.: On the spot?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: Who?

E.Z.: The Germans. Uh... they were walking around all the time.

N.B.: Did you see instances when people were... (E.Z.: Yes yes) shot on the spot?

E.Z.: Yes. Yes. But we went on working. No one paid attention, no one screamed, no one... nothing. Up on that red hill, too, uh... stained with blood, no... uh... I... I don't know, the... we were really like lambs. Really. Really, to say the truth, to be honest, no one resisted, nothing.

N.B.: Was there any...

E.Z.: Until, until the Warsaw uprising.

N.B.: In Plaszow, for example, was there anything you could do? Was there something you could've done?

E.Z.: Yes, there were all kinds of operations. Not...

N.B.: Resistance operations.

E.Z.: Uh... resistance? I think so, why not? But each was afraid for himself. There was nowhere to run, you'd get to... to... close to... to... f... Fence, you'd be electrified, and d... d... die on the spot. There was no way to... do something to escape. There was nothing, it was hermetically sealed. People would go to work outside the ghetto, and then there was this group of uh... um... Spielberg, of uh...

N.B.: Schindler?

E.Z.: Schindler. They were people, I must say this, those who got into Schindler's list were those who could pay for it. Those who could pay Schindler got into that group. He had to uh... bribe and throw parties for his German superiors, you see?

N.B.: Did you know about Schindler in... when you were in Plaszow?

E.Z.: No. No.

N.B.: So, what you just said is a rumor.

E.Z.: It's a rumor, my grandson made a school project on the subject.

N.B.: Yes?

E.Z.: On Schindler. On one hundred children, and on Schindler.

N.B.: And what did he find out about Schindler?

E.Z.: Uh... actually there are all kinds of things that... and except for that there are... there are a lot of people who knew him, and they say that... they had to pay Schindler, or promise him uh... houses in Krakow or in some other place. You see? Because... because... he... he needed money, because he was... actually, he was very poor after the war. He had nothing. If he didn't have support from Israel, he wouldn't have been able to survive, because the Germans didn't support him, that's it. No, I didn't know about it back then, because actually Schindler only started in '44, and by then I was in Czestochowa.

N.B.: Here, I found in the Boder interview...

E.Z.: Yes?

N.B.: The place I was looking for earlier.

E.Z.: Yes?

N.B.: Uh... where you're Boder the you were with father uh... in the work camp.

E.Z.: Yes, in Biezanaw.

N.B.: With your sister.

E.Z.: Yes, that was in Plaszow already.

N.B.: He a... no. Um... you know what, let's do it like this, I'll let you read it...

E.Z.: Yes, th... that would be best.

N.B.: Read (E.Z.: I wanted to tell you) this, it's in this page.

E.Z.: Yes. Boder [Mumbles as she reads the text]. Yes uh... it's true. They wanted to throw me out because I was little. And then they arranged for me to be 15.

N.B.: No, but there's (E.Z.: Further), read the rest.

E.Z.: Well uh... [Mumbles as she reads the text] And then I went with my sister, because I saw she couldn't stay in the ca... the camp, so I left her with... with gentiles.

N.B.: Yes, but there is a description here of how you were physically thrown over the Fence. [Pause] You don't remember.

E.Z.: No. [Pause] No. [Pause]

N.B.: It doesn't ring a bell?

E.Z.: But I don't understand, it's not on the tape. Where did he take it from?

N.B.: This is a transcription of the tape.

E.Z.: No. I've listened to it the last two days. It's not there.

N.B.: Then uh... we'll check on that.

E.Z.: [Reads and mumbles] I think he added something here, to... the cassette doesn't have a single word about this.

N.B.: About you being thrown over the Fence?

E.Z.: No no no. Nothing. Maybe he mixed it with some... other children's interview. [Reads and mumbles] yes, it's true (N.B.: It's true). It's true that he wanted money.

N.B.: So there's this part here which isn't clear.

E.Z.: But I don't understand what... when were we thrown out, and where. When my sis... when I got with my sister to Biezanaw, they immediately said that she couldn't stay there, and they told me to get out, then they fixed my... my age, they increased my age (N.B.: Yes), and g... gave me a piece of... in Poland there's uh... this uh... uh... coffee additive, with a red wrapping, so they gave a big piece of this, and said, every day put on some uh...

N.B.: Make up.

E.Z.: Make up. And I had long braids, back then, so I had this haircut, and I worked in the kitchen and pretended to be fifteen. But then uh... when they woke me up at night (N.B.: Yes), I told them, because I was sleepy, uh... I told them my true age. And then they took me out, me and that woman. They killed her and I stayed alive. But th... my sister, I immediately knew that she couldn't stay, she was very young, too,

and... so I immediately went up and... we... went out to Wieliczka and left her there.
[Read and mumbles] But this isn't on the cassette at all.

N.B.: It's not on the cassette.

E.Z.: No. Not a word.

N.B.: I wanted to ask you something else (E.Z.: Yes?), um... you told me about uh... Brill.

E.Z.: What was his first name?

E.Z.: Egon.

N.B.: Egon Brill. Who... you later found got married with someone who escaped from Skarzysko Kamien (E.Z.: Yes). Right?

E.Z.: Yes yes yes.

N.B.: You haven't told us about that, you told about it in... what...

E.Z.: Well, it... when they came to Is... came to Israel to visit, I uh... asked her where she was.

N.B.: Yes.

E.Z.: I didn't meet her in Skarzysko.

N.B.: You didn't meet her.

E.Z.: No. No.

N.B.: And then she told you that she was in Skarzysko?

E.Z.: Yes, in Skarzysko, and that her parents had paid some Polish woman who came to the Fence, in Skarzysko, and that woman, that is, I don't know what happened exactly, I don't... I really don't know exactly, she went out, and was taken back to Lodz, so that she wasn't in Skarzysko or Czestochowa, just a short time in Skar... in Skarzysko.

N.B.: And they... snuk her out?

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: How were her parents in a position to sneak her out, do you know?

E.Z.: They must've had money, wealthy people.

N.B.: And did you know that because she ran away from Skarzysko uh... several people were executed because of her?

E.Z.: I didn't know, was it before she escaped, or after?

N.B.: No, because she escaped.

E.Z.: Oh, Yes. Yes. Yes yes.

N.B.: As punishment, as...

E.Z.: Yes.

N.B.: Did you know about this incident in Skarzysko, or did she tell you about it?

E.Z.: No, I... I knew that if someone of a line would escape, disappear, didn't get up in the morning or evening, didn't come, there were some who... were sick, so they'd check they were in the camp, if they weren't then... then they'd... it was collective responsibility, f... for each other. That is, every one of the five had to make sure the whole five would be p... present, and look for them and make sure. Otherwise, they'd shoot them all. So each one watched the others.

N.B.: And in her case do you know...

E.Z.: I don't, I don't know, she told me here that she'd escaped, that I... I don't know.

N.B.: Uh huh.

E.Z.: No no. (N.B.: You don't know...) I didn't know... I didn't know her name. It was a coincidence that... we sat one evening and talked, and I asked her where she was, so she said, in Skarzysko. I said, "In Skarzysko?" So she told me the story, of how she'd escaped. No, I didn't know her. I told you, I was lonely and I had no contact with people. There are some who meet up today, these groups, for example, I've been in a Holocaust Children meeting in the U.S., and Holocaust Children uh... uh... revival, they meet up, whenever they have the chance, they invite each other, I don't... don't... don't... don't have any contact, I have contact with Lena's children's home, but not with the people with whom I've been in wo... uh... in the camps. That, no. That's it. I was really lonely that all time, alone with myself.

N.B.: In the camps in Skarzysko and Czestochowa (E.Z.: Yes). And could that be the reason that you remember so little from them?

E.Z.: No, I remember everything. I remember everything from Skarzysko and Czestochowa. Everything. It's not... not... it's not... it's not because of that. But I just didn't relate to anyone.

N.B.: Do you remember any underground resistance activity in Czestochowa?

E.Z.: Uh... again, not that I remember, I... I have the book, The Ye... The... The Yellow Stain. The Yellow Patch. No, The Yellow Stain. About Skarzysko, which is a very documentary book, and I read about it there. I didn't know.

N.B.: About Skarzysko or about Czestochowa?

E.Z.: About Skar... no, Skarzysko.

N.B.: Skarzysko.

E.Z.: Thick book, excellent, and there I learned about everything that was going on in Skarzysko.

N.B.: It was written by, what's her name...

E.Z.: It's by Zilia uh...

N.B.: Yes.

E.Z.: Uh... yes. Uh... I have her phone number, uh... K... uh... Karo... I forget names.

N.B.: Yes, I also knew her name, ok.

E.Z.: Yes. Yes (N.B.: She... she was an inmate there), she sent me the book. Yes. But she didn't go to Chlestokova, she went to Lipsk, Leipzig. And they were liberated very late, only when the war ended. Yes. She also sent me a Polish book, by a group who'd written poetry in the camp. So, there... there was a resistance, and there was a... collective in the camp, uh... most of them were high school uh... girls older than I was, uh... from the Krakow high school, who were uh... were... sixteen, seventeen, or something like that.

N.B.: Did you know them in Skarzysko?

E.Z.: Uh... a Few, yes. From the... from the book, that she mentioned in the book, yes. Yes. One of them was the one who would give me the... the slice of bread, the tip of the loaf, she was a friend of hers, of Cella. But back then I didn't know anything. I didn't know anything about what was happening, nothing. Really. I wasn't interested, even though I'm a very curious person, but it didn't interest me. That's it, that is my story.

N.B.: And does it sometimes flash back in your thoughts, in your dreams?

E.Z.: Especially when I uh... especially when I talk about it I have some... my husband, he's asked not to go anywhere this year, I was supposed to be in Kazerin, I've been there twice already. And... really, they come and take me, and all, and bring me back, it's all fine. So he says, "You can't imagine the way you scream at nights afterwards." Let me rest, stay at home and don't go. So I stayed. This year I've watched a lot of films in Holocaust Day, which usually I don't, because I'm giving a lecture either at Beit Bira or somewhere else, I uh... they ask to bring me over and I don't refuse, this year he asked me, do me a favor, don't go, rest. So it really... there were also problems with... it... I... I assume... I assume this is not on tape.

N.B.: It is on tape.

E.Z.: Oh! Wow. These are bedroom secrets, well... [laughs]

N.B.: No...

E.Z.: No, he asked, no... it was enough for him what happened with the Pope, phone calls, about two hundred people called in one day, 270 phone calls every minute. He stayed home, I went alone to Yad Vashem, that is, I was taken there. And people called, and... when I spoke at the radio in... in the morning, several days earlier, people called, and wanted to know, and... it was a mess for him [laughs]. So I told him, don't come with me, it's again and.... and... I was putting too much on him.

N.B.: What important... what have you not yet told us that is important to you?

E.Z.: About what?

N.B.: About... your life during the holocaust.

E.Z.: Look, that I've stayed alive is... I call it a wonder, really, with everything that... everything you've heard here, so much, and afterwards, after the war, my severe illness too, but in every, in... in every place and time I met people whom I made friends with, the opposite of what happened in the camp, and I'm still close to people, Christians and Jews, very close, so I remember the period after the war as a very fruitful one, in which I've gained a lot, and in which I developed, and afterwards had a family, a healthy family, that's the story. In spite of all. It's really... it's a gift, I think. After everything... I've been through so much, I've lost so much, my entire family, they're gone. Gone. Except for the Brazilians there's... there's nothing, uh... no... no... no... no family, and that relationship isn't much to speak of either [sob], I have a family of my own, and great children and grandchildren, and... I'm somehow functioning at 72 [sob].

N.B.: I wish you many more good years.

E.Z.: Yes, thank you.

N.B.: And thank you very much.

E.Z.: [sob] Thank you very much.

Conclusion of Interview