

Noon. Welcome to the First Person program at the Holocaust Museum. We're very glad to see you all here. This is a very special program in the museum's offerings of an opportunity to hear in the first person from Holocaust survivors who also serve as volunteers here at the museum. And today, you're going to be hearing from Kristine Belfoure.

I'd like to give you a little bit of information. First, we're going to be-- just to tell you a little bit about our format-- perhaps I should introduce myself also. I'm Raye Farr. I'm director of the film and video branch here at the museum and have some background previously in television documentaries. I've been at the museum, as has Kristine, since long before it opened. I think we both started before 1990. So we're old-timers here.

The format for this afternoon is that you're going to hear from Kristine talking about her personal experiences until about 1:45, when we'll have time for some questions and answers. If you have passes for the exhibition, don't worry about the time on them. We hope you can stay for the whole program. Your passes will be good any time following. You don't have to be there right at the time that it says on your ticket.

And we have-- as just a little bit of background, so that I can introduce Kristine to you before we actually begin our conversation, we'll show you a little bit on the screen to give you a sense of where Kristine comes from. And folks are in their seats. And we can make it a little darker.

Kristine was born in Poland-- and in fact, in the city-- oh, yes, sorry. This is my first time. I'm filling in for Bill Benson, who usually does these programs. And Kristine is from Kraków in southwestern Poland, beautiful, old, historic city with an ancient and wonderful university, where her father was a professor, and many beautiful, historic buildings and castle-- still a beautiful city. And the area of Kraków was invaded by the Germans when the war started in September 1939.

Her own history-- Kristine is not Jewish. She is one of the Polish survivors of the experience of life in German-occupied Poland and being used for forced labor. And she was in several labor camps, including Dora, and eventually, Dora-Mittelbau, where they built weapons for the German military. And at the end of the war, she was liberated, I believe, from-- you were liberated from the camp.

She has a little bit of laryngitis. So we're going to work our way through this. But I'm going to come over-- Nordhausen-- Nordhausen is the camp I was trying to think of where she was at the end of the war. How's the sound level back there? Can you hear us? OK. And Kristine has a little laryngitis. So if you have any trouble hearing her, I'll try to repeat it.

So let's just get started with-- Kristine, tell us a little bit about your family background and the age you were when the war started.

I really don't come from a very nice family because I lived with my mother and my stepfather. I also had a father who had two sons. I had to see my father every Friday to tell him what happened during the week. And if I made a mistake in speech or something, he says, what do you have in Polish? And I say, "A." He says, what? And he runs to school and tells the teacher that I don't know anything. And he gives me good grade for my name.

And the teacher said-- and that happened not only once in Polish. But then she didn't like my grammar. And of course, you have to know that Polish is a Latin grammar. And there are 14 changes on each Polish noun so that it's very difficult. Polish, as a matter of fact, it's one of the most difficult languages to learn because, well, not only do they have extra endings, different endings at the nouns, but pronouns and all that kind of stuff.

And so to this day, I teach a Polish class, and I still don't know why anybody in his right mind would want to learn Polish. Because when they go back to-- so I always say to them, now, when you go to Poland, make sure you speak Polish. He says, we can't. And I say, what do you mean, we can't? You know enough Polish to do anything. They say, no, because they are trying their English on us. So the minute somebody learns they are from America, and show off with the English. They want to be corrected. And they want to know whether they're saying it right. And I say, well, that's not only in Poland, that's every place like that.

And so I know that I took some kind of hygiene in school too. And he asked me, what are you-- what would you do if I fainted? I don't know what I told him. He runs back there and tells the teacher, what? How dare you give her a good grade. She doesn't know what to do in case I fell down. And anyhow, she told him off. And so I really didn't start liking my father till I came back after the war.

But before that, I wish-- and I had this wish many a time that I didn't have him because he was a pain in the neck in my school. Here I was, this big hero in school, and he comes and tells them that I don't know anything. Anyhow, my stepfather was one of those sports fans.

But anyhow, living with them was very nice. They didn't push me like my father did. And when you were young-- or you youngsters know how it is when your parent says, do better with this, do that, don't go out, study, and all this kind of stuff. Sad. What can old people tell you? When you're young, you're all-knowing and nobody can tell you anything. And of course, I'm getting it back with my son and my grandchildren. I dished it out too.

And first, we lived in the neighborhood of Debniki, where more than half the population was Jews. I went to school with 11 elementary school Jewish girls. And that's where I learned that there's also such a thing like prejudice. I had this beloved friend that lived on the corner of this marketplace. And across the street was living this present Pope with his father. And in the house of Sara--

Present Pope?

Yeah.

Oh, I see.

And he lives in the house of my friend Sara. And when she got-- she always would come to-- we always had lessons on Saturday. But the Jewish girls were excused. But we didn't know that they had to go to school on Sundays. We were so jealous. How can they only have five day schools and we all have six? And so one time, she got sick. And I went with a gift to her.

And her mother-- I expected her to say, come in, open the door. And I say, I heard that Sara is sick. And I have a gift for her. I was about to step in. And she just took the gift. And I went. So I say to Sara, what with your mother? Wouldn't let me in. And she says, oh, because she thought you're going to make it trefny.

Know what that is? Who knows what trefny is? Trefny is that if you follow a Jewish culinary tradition, there are certain things that you only use for milk, something, some other things you cannot touch it. It's just different between so-called [NON-ENGLISH]-- milk and food. Meat and milk, you never touch it. They never go together. But then since I didn't know any difference, I would have probably touched the wrong cup, something like that. After I knew that, I understood. And I remember from my youth the Jewish fish stores.

Jewish meat stores? Meat stores?

Fish stores.

Fish stores.

Yeah. They had the most delicious-- that's what their specialty, to sell, make the Jewish fish products. And to this day, when I think about the szprot and all that, I think about those stores. And that's what, really, I miss most when I miss Kraków. And of course, besides that, you always miss this hamentashen and all this [NON-ENGLISH] that they bake for special holidays. And then they have this outside little houses made out of grasses or whatever.

And those are things that I miss terribly. It was that-- when you brought up in that kind of culture, we love people. You don't hate them. You don't make any different. You don't differentiate. I mean, you know them. And that's it. It's

probably true, because my name was Ewa Krystyna, the people sometimes thought I was a Jewess. But then the Germans say, oh, she couldn't be. With a nose like her, she couldn't possibly be Jewish.

How old were you when the Germans invaded?

I think I was-- I'm going on 15. Yeah, I wasn't going 15 yet. Or was it 14? I was born in '24, so anyhow.

What was your first encounter with the Germans?

Well, about the cruelty of the Germans, I only learned when I was reading how they attacked Poland first. And for every fallen German, they would kill 100 Poles. Because when Kraków was a historical city, what was an so-called open city. So we didn't defend it because we thought the Germans gonna go past. And we going to still be around. We've been around so many enemies that we probably know how to survive.

And so the first soldiers that I saw were soldiers in this huge market, washing, and shaving, and all kind of stuff. And there were a bunch of Jewish boys who spoke very good German. So we went together and asked them-- we were trying our German on them. And of course, I really didn't see any cruelty then.

Only cruelty that I-- is later. I didn't even know that Jews were persecuted for the simple reason that when we lived-- then we move up to the high school, when I went to a high school, we move up in the neighborhood and all that. In the neighborhood, you also never saw anything. All you knew is that this was a section where very rich Jews live. And of course, the very rich already escaped to wherever they were going to escape.

And I had an uncle who was a-- before he was a big shot at the post office, worked in-- they were mailmen who delivered dollars, francs, or whatever for a money, foreign exchange money. And he was saying to his clients, if you are smart, and you have money, you wouldn't stay here. But he read Mein Kampf.

Read Hitler's book, Mein Kampf.

And he says, if I were you, with all your money, I would never stay here. No. Well, some did, and some did not. Anyhow, he was always involved with these people. And during the war, he asked my mother, can you take a Jewish woman into your house? And he asked me if my mother would take this Jewish woman. And I said, no, never tell her that she's Jewish.

Well, since this grandmother didn't want to go with her Jewish children to Italy, she said, I'm too old. I'm going to die here. I'm not going anyplace. I love this city. Oh, OK. And the cook was left with her. So then when she came to live with us, the cook would always deliver food so that my mother really didn't have to do anything except maybe toilet paper. But everything else was delivered.

He was also the one who-- she stayed. And I was already in Germany. And she died peacefully in our house. And nobody knew, except that I had to teach him-- that my uncle said, you have to teach them prayers, Catholic prayers. Those are the first thing they do, they ask you about the Christian Catholic holidays, and the prayers, and this, and that.

They're checking your identity to make sure that--

And so he says to me, buy her a rosary and give it to her in her hand. So even if somebody talks to her, nobody would talk to an old lady doing the rosary. And they would live in peace. But the trouble with this lady was that she was kind of deaf. And so when she prayed, I said to her to pray loud, that people around would hear that she is not a Jew, but a Catholic.

And so she prayed so loud, now, people come knocking at the floors, knocking on the ceiling, knocking on the walls. I said, [INAUDIBLE], shut up with these prayers. And she would say it, what is knocking at the door? And of course, it was a 10 knocks everyplace.

Your mother never knew that she was Jewish?

Yeah. And after the war, she swore that she was not Jewish, that she was this Jewish niania, who he says, you won't show me a Jew pray the rosary. I think she was a little naive, to say the least.

Can I ask you a question? I'm sorry, I don't really want to interrupt. But I want to make sure we fit into the time. You mentioned going to high school. And I'm wondering how that fit in with the German rules that prevented the education of Poles beyond a low grade, which I'm sure you can tell us about.

Well, in order to make a cultural desert out of Poland, they cut out all high schools, or universities, and higher schools--lyceums, gymnasium, or whatever they had. In elementary school, we were good enough to finish fifth grade. That would allow you to know how to count, know how to sign your name, and how to read the German regulations we were also posted in Polish. And that's all they concerned about.

And so that was a worst thing you could do, remember how you complained that you had to learn a lot. Oh, not again, I read a whole book, I did this, and that, and all those dates, and all this. And then all of a sudden, it means, no Polish books allowed, no Polish notebooks, with no notebooks with a map of Poland, and not one mention of Poland in the school.

But of course, we went. And we had lots of German and Austrian mothers. And so they decided that since we all had one year of high school, parents wanted to continue. And so they-- I don't know how they did it, but they changed our gymnasium, which was an academic one, into a kindergarten teachers' school.

And then we had what was so-called underground school, where you keep on taking lessons with your old teachers. Mostly, well, history, you can read in a book, but French, and Latin, and all this other stuff that you could not get in a regular high school, we just continued just as we were and had exams.

But it was forbidden by the Germans. So you're doing it secretly, right, against the German regulations.

Well, of course, everything you do. Surviving means doing everything under regulation. You can't possibly listen to regulations and survive.

And how did you come to be taken for basically-- well, maybe I'm ahead of the story-- forced labor is later, I guess, right?

Well, foreign languages got me into it. And I love languages. And my father always said, you have to know the language of your enemy. And since Poland had two of them, and the German were closer than the Russians, so I learned German first.

And besides, there were very cheap German lessons because any Pole who did not want to sign the Volksliste-- as you know, Poland is a agglomeration of all kinds of foreigners, and lots of them were German. But they, of course, through centuries, they became Poles. And all of a sudden, the German government goes into every village, every little town and big town, and looks who is of German extraction because you have the birth certificates and all that kind of stuff. And so they can learn it. And they make these people sign a Volksliste because they wanted to have millions and millions of Germans.

Volksliste, so that's like the Volksdeutsch, of German origin.

That's right.

OK.

And the higher he was, the higher was his social status, the more he was punished. Some were killed on the street if they showed up in some uniform or something like that, which also was stupid. But young men are always stupid. In this

respect, they want to show up. And so some were sent to concentration camps and some sent to labor camps. And if you didn't work on the fellow who was supposed to sign it, they tried to work on his family.

And there was this one aristocratic family, Heidelbrunn. And they had four-- the father was already dead, which was old mother. And they had four sons. And the all four sons were Polish officers. One died in Katyn at the hands of the Soviets. Who signed the Volksliste, they run away, and join the Polish underground.

The fourth one was very stubborn. And he said, I'm not signing anything because he had it easy to say because he was under the Geneva protection in officers' camp. And so they couldn't do anything to him. And they tried so hard. And so they would try to put his old mother someplace. And then it would say, what would the German aristocrat say to that? I don't know how the story ended because I read it in the Holocaust Museum. And I don't know how it ended, whether he-- and I'm quite sure he didn't sign it. But this is what they did. They wanted people to sign all kinds of documents that they named. And some people did sign it for bread and butter.

Actually, I had a-- my friend's mother was of German extraction. And he was an engineer. And he had four people to support-- his mother, and his father, and his wife, and his daughter. And I remember, I saw him across the street in this Goerings Werke. And I said to my mother, what is Mr. Gabrisz doing there? And then it dawned on me what he can be doing and my mother says, don't you ever look at this traitor again. And I suppose in Polish, [POLISH]. My stepfather went to work. And by the next day, and I say, what are you doing? And he says, I can't find my battalion.

I can't find my battalion?

Battalion. And she said, well, get on a bicycle and go after it. I went on a bicycle, went after it, and got to a PW camp. So he survived the war.

So he was caught and put in a prisoners' camp. And the Germans found out that you were good at languages, right?

Oh, yeah. Well, they needed all the Polish-- they needed workers. They needed Polish people who spoke German to get them all this labor force they needed. And just because I was-- knowing me, I was the first one to volunteer for this German school, where you learn German, more German, and the shorthand, and I was excellent, excellent at that. One of my teachers was a young avid Nazi, who wanted to do with all of the non-German names in the German vocabulary. And for him, this writing was a [NON-ENGLISH], a comma. A comma.

And also, he used the word [NON-ENGLISH], which is a [INAUDIBLE]. And he didn't explain to us what it meant. But very often, he called us [NON-ENGLISH] or something like that. And so when the chief of the Gestapo in Pomorska Street saw the list of the best students from the Arbeitsamt school, the labor office school, he asked for me. Instead of-- I was supposed to go to work for a bank. But he got me.

So here, I go to this first interview. And I smile, and sit, and take the dictation, and all that. And last smiling, I give it back to him. He looks at me like that. And then he throws the thing at me. Anyhow, what he saw was that German, they have so many comments after every sentence. And all right. Wherever there was a comma, I wrote the word comma because I never heard that before.

And so you can imagine, here are the best Arbeitsamt school. And you know, what about the others? Must be a bunch of idiots. You're the best one for that kind of stuff. And because this happened-- of course, and in my age, they called me in Polish swine, a swine. And I call him a Prussian [? freckle. ?] But I didn't know he was an Austrian to begin with. And so I ran.

I was going to go home because I actually lived two streets from the Gestapo. And I said, that's stupid. That's the first place where they're going to look. And I remember the Ukrainian lady that lived in that room before the old Jewish lady was living. And she said, just meet me after the war, after the first days of the war. She says, now, listen, if you get in trouble, come to see me because I'm a very important lawyer for the Arbeitsamt.

And so I ran to her. And she told me where to go. You don't go home. Go to some friend, give me her address. And I

will contact your parents and all that. OK. She couldn't contact my father because he was already in Switzerland with the Polish Army. And from there, he went to France.

And so I went to my friend. And she comes to my friend, I was. She says, she never got here. Went to my parents. My parents said, no, she wasn't here. And so since she knew the workings, she know you got-- we had to be in the transit camp. And so she looked for the first the date of disappearance and all that kind of stuff.

And then she said, I can't get you out of-- but I can fix it up so that you can go to a easy industry. And that's how I got into this Hamewacker, which was a factory that produced chewing tobacco. And of course, chewing tobacco was a war production. Because when a soldier needed nicotine, he could stick it in his mouth and chew the nicotine. And he didn't have to light up a cigarette or anything like that.

And so they used forced Polish labor to produce chewing tobacco which was being supplied to the German military?

That's how they did. They used everything for that. Now, of course, worse was when we started working for this Schmidt and Kranz-- well, anyhow, how to make a short story, in that Hamewacker factory, there were English POWs. And you know what young girls and young men do.

I'm going to explain POW-- we're used to using POWs, but prisoners of war.

And so what we did is the Englishman had cigarettes and chocolate. But if they wanted to escape, they had to have a train ticket. They had to have some clothing. They had to see how they can get to the train and all this. And so they we would get chocolate. And it would go to the French. And we would exchange it for whatever they needed. And that, of course, gets you in trouble too.

Were you living in the camp? You were forced to stay within the camp at that point?

In camp, see, the first camp didn't have iron fences. They only had a wooden, like purely where the chewing tobacco was. Thought we over. And I got kicked into this machinery camp, which was kind of iron post and all that kind of stuff. Again, whenever you are, you can always find a good soul who somehow will protect.

And while we were in this-- that was the most horrible thing that we learned that we are actually helping build arms, bullets, airplanes that went to England, against England. And that was the worst thing. Of course, for sabotage, it was a death sentence. And the trick was how to sabotage without them knowing it. But there are all kinds of ways that you can do it.

And so on top of it, I get this call from the French-- no, I get this note or a knock at the window. Somebody wants to get in touch with you. And it was a Frenchman, who said I have to deliver a message to the English that the work for tomorrow is already done, cannot be undone or whatever they did, something of this sort. He says, let them know that it's no go for tomorrow. What they're going to do is night. How are you going to let them know?

So what I had to do was large. It really wasn't-- because the camp manager's assistant left the door to the office open. And so I just went in and made the telephone call. But just before I finished this telephone call, somebody grabs me. And first place, I wasted too much time looking in the telephone book. But then I saw that he had this list of all the camps in this town on the desk. And there was this Stalag 36 of the English.

And so I called. They had a man called Fritz who used to do them favors. So whenever we had something to do, get for them, we would contact this Fritz. Well, the Fritz that I got on the telephone was not the Fritz that I wanted. This Fritz was a commander of that Stalag. And so I didn't know that they listen to what I sa-- grab.

And they said, to whom are you talking? And she grabs it. And she says, Fritz? And this Fritz told her in very nasty words not to bother him because I already bothered him once. I said, I don't want to talk to you. I want to talk to the other Fritz. And now, she comes. And she wants this Fritz.

And so she says, if I had a nice boyfriend, I would say anything. But to have a boyfriend who is a German officer and who is so nasty, that's impossible. And anyhow, she says, now, you're going to go to a camp. Well, no. So anyhow, they sent me to another camp. And in that factory, there was this--

Kristine, I'm going to ask you a quick question. Were you just a troublemaker, or were you very bold, or were you working with the organized underground?

I was just young and foolish. To me, everything like that was an adventure. When I had to jump out and get out from the streetcar to the ghetto, that was an adventure. I wasn't thinking about breaking my legs or getting caught. I just thought, that's an adventure. Once I made it-- well, I was going back just for one minute.

One time, this uncle of mine told me to deliver something to this old man. In Poland, all the book stores were really beautiful Jewish bookstores. And the Polish bookkeepers wanted to make sure that the Jewish bookkeepers who were in the ghetto were supplied. So they would send themselves because for money, you can bribe anybody.

And I get to almost break my neck because first time when you do something, you really don't know what you're doing. You count on your luck. I was lucky. I go with this man, then we knew, jump over the fence-- not a fence, but get into the ghetto, and they put you a blue Star of David on you-- and you just walk through the ghetto.

So you put it on?

Yeah.

Yeah?

Yeah, well, we always had stuff like that in case we need it. And so the guy says-- the old man, excuse me, says to me, ah, yeah, take it back. I'm too old. I don't need it anymore. Tell him to give it to the young people who have a chance of survival. I'm not going to survive any longer. I'm 80 years old. OK. I say, you write that on this piece of paper. And then I take it back. So he wrote it. That was most-- I was so deceived. I was counting on being this big hero, doing stuff that nobody else would do. And he won't take it. He says, take it back.

I was just-- well, anyhow. So then I had a different-- then there was an easier way of delivering letters and money. I didn't have to because if I were caught with those diamonds, I definitely-- I always asked my uncle, how did you trust me with those diamonds?

And he says, well, the first thing, you're smart. Secondly, you're honest, honest little Catholic that taught this Jewish lady all the prayers and all this kind of stuff. Oh, yeah, and I went to the priest. And I said, my uncle told me to teach this Jewish lady Catholic prayers. Am I doing something wrong? He says, oh, no, child, you're saving a life. OK. That fixed me up with the church.

So then you end up in a worse camp. In fact, tell us a little bit about Dora. Because I think those weapons are really--

Those were the soul-stirring bombs that were warming over England and London, especially. And when we learned that we were doing this, I mean, we were just petrified.

This is the factory where the V-1 and V-2 rockets were made. And if I'm correct, the V-2 were the buzz bombs that would go. And then the engine would cut out. And it would just drop. And London was very badly hurt by that.

And it's really through learning that you're supporting your enemy-- I mean, chewing tobacco, I didn't mind. We didn't mind because we thought you can eat it. But you can't eat that stuff because the chewing tobacco is put in a fruit juice or something like that to really taste good. So we thought, well, maybe we can eat it and see if it's-- well, I think all of us were sick for a week. And that wasn't.

Food was also empty. But you always can steal. You can go around in a garden, pull up a carrot. That's what I said

about being in a slave labor camp was no comparison with a concentration camp. Because in a concentration camp, you had real killers, famed killers murdering people, whereas in a slave labor camp, you could not be very cruel because they had civilians with them. They didn't want to show the civilians how cruel they really were.

And if there were guards from the small town-- I was lucky in a small town-- they knew each other. And they would tell about this. Do you know, this guy is cruel, and this, and that kind of stuff. They had to be a little nicer to us than they would be. So I really don't feel that I'm a big survivor because it was only slave labor camps. It was nothing that I-- I knew that if I was smart enough and cautious enough, that I might survive, whereas you wouldn't in a concentration camp, no matter what you do. You don't know if you're going to come alive. It's at the whimsy of the SS, of the Gestapo, and all that. And I just hope that none of you ever live through this.

When you were in these labor camps, were you ever with people you knew-- neighbors, or friends from before the war?

No, no, because my neighbors went-- see, Auschwitz used to be a Polish camp for Polish intellectuals. And so when the first people who were locked up disappeared in my city, well, people who were my neighbor's sons, my neighbor's daughters, and the first one that disappeared were teachers. And it didn't matter to them whether the teacher was Jewish or not. As long as she was a teacher and he could teach Polishness, that was out.

Germans didn't want to.

No. No.

And maybe you could explain how close Auschwitz was to your city. Well, since I was never there. But it's not very close. You always--

It's not next to it. But Kraków is the biggest city near Auschwitz, right?

Yeah.

I mean, it's about, what, 70 kilometers, 40 miles? 40 miles or 45 miles, depending what door you come in. Because if you had to go around, it was much farther.

So basically, what you're referring to is that-- how the Germans suppressed all the Polish intellectuals and leaders at the beginning of the war.

Anybody who had a degree or who worked for-- with any higher education, he disappeared. And so the first ones that I knew, if I had stayed in Debni, then of course, I would have known what happened to the Jews. But since we moved up, everybody that was taken to Auschwitz was Polish, I mean, Catholic.

Where were you when the war ended? How did it end for you?

Where was I? I don't even remember where I was. Oh, no, I was in Mauthausen. Oh, yeah, and before that, let's see, I was in that machine factory, which is all German-- meier or is it major?

Major.

And I never know the meiers and the majors. And anyhow, he got used-- I was made like a Friday girl.

A girl Friday.

Girl Friday.

Girl Friday.



Somebody was not and they stuck me there. So I never learned anything. But I knew everything a little bit. And this person that I knew was this old major. And I used to bring to-- he would send me to bring him biscuits and coffee. Now, when I got arrested and I didn't come to the office-- well, I wasn't arrested, I was just beaten to pulp for this telephone conversation. And he-- a second day, he didn't get his coffee, a third day, he didn't get his biscuits.

So he asked one of the guards, says, what happened to me? And he says, oh, we can't tell you. Yes, what happened? And so they says, well, she got so beaten that she couldn't get up. And don't tell anybody we told you. But of course, the first thing he did, went to the office and told them to call the doctor to see what was wrong with me.

And he-- then the director said that if we do have to punish, we will punish. We don't want the camp-- they had absolutely no idea how this was really run, by whom. The SS didn't run the camps. They didn't run-- the [INAUDIBLE] himself didn't run the camp. And so when they told us, the lagerführer, the camp director, that if there's any punishment to be done, they will do it. And I'm too valuable, knowing three languages, that I can't be absent for so long.

And that really got them, plus this man who left the door open, and then this camp director. And so she says to me, next time, I send you-- one more false step and I send you to a camp where even 10 imperial majors won't get to. And so it happened. And luckily, in Dora, there were also private entrepreneurs who were helping build those bombs. And it was this firm, was a building firm, that delivered stumps of wood to support the tunnels because all this industry was in the tunnels. Once you got in the tunnel, you never got out alive. But that's a different story.

They were in tunnels so that the Allied air attacks wouldn't sit up with production.

Yeah. But he was delivering-- this man who owned this building company and provided the prisoners from Dora, whom they called zebras because they had a striped uniform, so everybody called them zebras, and then he also had a bunch of Frenchmen. Those French had to deliver there so many Frenchmen to work in German industries. And then he had a bunch of Russians, some 30 Russians.

And he asked one of his SS friends-- or was it Gestapo? I don't remember. In a small town, they went to school together so they know each other and they do favors for each other. And so if he didn't know anybody who speaks languages because he is in such a need, he can get the word through to anybody. And so this engineer, that's the one who caught me cheating on the clock.

Krystyna, I hate to interrupt you, but I think we need to wind up so we have little time for questions. There are some in the air and space fields here.

Yeah, they are.

Am I right?

They are.

Right?

Yes, they are.

So a little too close for comfort maybe, right?

But I did see them. And just to think that I-- that we were helping.

You were part of that, very difficult. Well, thank you so much. I would really like to open this up to any questions from the audience. And if you have them, I'll repeat the question so everyone can hear it. Go ahead. Your year of your birth, 1924?

'24.

'24.

The date of my death, I don't know yet.

And she's asking what happened to your parents-- your mother, your father.

Well, my mother and her husband survived. And my stepfather was captured by the Soviets. My father went to fight for the French. And the French surrendered. So this very smart Polish general [PERSONAL NAME] got in with the Swiss frontier, the 45,000 people. And they laid their arms at the Swiss frontier. And they were interned. And they were used--

So this is the Polish Army. Your father was in the Polish.

And then they returned them. And they made them work because Switzerland didn't have one, except maybe for a little garden with some green sticking to it-- they didn't have any industry, any agriculture. So these fellows had to go up in the mountain and do anything possible they can to do some farmer work. Really started farming there because they didn't do any farming in Switzerland. Yeah?

Let me just repeat the question. Young man is asking if Kristine had any brothers and sisters.

I had two more step brothers who are much younger than I. They were just little kids.

They were all OK during the war?

During the war, yes. But then the younger one, who was an excellent kayaker, somehow got a heart attack and went down into the river. And but at least the other one is still here. And he teaches neuropharmacology at the Polish Institute of Pharmacology in Kraków.

Any other questions? Yes.

No, I didn't live there because you see--

I'm sorry, let me repeat so people in the back can hear. After the war, how long was it before Kristine was living under Soviet domination? Actually, we've skipped the whole DP camp.

Yeah.

So you could fill that in.

Well, the Soviet occupation was just as bad as the Nazis, except that they would send you to Siberia to those gulags and they were also after rich Jews, educated Jews, educated Poles-- because Poles were never rich-- and let's see what else, and anybody who worked for the state, even a poor mailman, they would go after them because then they represented the patriotism and all that kind of stuff.

So how long were you actually in a displaced persons camp?

Oh, my gosh, I was very long because I went to school. The UNRRA, that was United Nations Refugee Rehabilitation, paid for my schooling. And I went to a school university in Frankfurt. And when I finished, there one of the directors said, there's no future. The displaced persons camps will be all closed.

But then, of course, we weren't waiting because we all wanted to emigrate someplace. And since we learned that if you emigrated to Australia and you have to serve three years doing anything they want you, and they send you someplace to get the sugar cane or something like that, and you had to get bags of sugar cane, so we decided, Australia was out.

And when did you come to the United States?

1950, through a Catholic charities. That I had to go to church every day to make sure-- not every day, but every Sunday, to make sure that my priest would give me a good certificate of good conduct because that was one of the things.

And I didn't explain in my introduction that Kristine was a teacher for many, many years and a teacher of languages. Perhaps you'd like to say a little more about how you came from Poland and did that.

Well, what do you want me to say?

Well, I don't know. When did you become a teacher in the United States?

Oh, I think I graduated from Frostburg in '63 and started Middlebury before that. So I got a master's from Middlebury Language School and something from Frostburg State. And I still don't understand why people don't want to go to small colleges. They pay so much money to go to those big guys. And there's no difference in the first two years where you go. They teach you all the same stuff.

Well, I want to thank you all for being with us today, for coming to the First Person program. I want to thank Kristine Belfoure very much for sharing this with us. And part of the tradition in this program-- we'll give her a hand in a sec-- is to give the first person the last word. And please, tell us anything further you'd like to.

Well, can I tell them about the--

Anything you want.

Anything?

Anything you want.

Well, that got me in trouble in Germany was what I was telling my civilian workers that they didn't kill the Jews, they killed their own because most Polish Jews were Khazarian converts. And of course, if you know the story, Khazaria was a country between the lower Volga and the northern slope of the Caucasus.

And one of the emperors wanted to bring in state religion so he can control the people better. And so he inquired with the Muslims, inquired with the Byzantium Christians, and he decided that the best religion for his country would be Judaism. And he converted, in 740, everybody to Judaism. And then, of course, as any empire, this fell through and attacked by somebody else. And all the Khazarians, the Jewish Khazarians, they all came to Poland.

And that's why lots of Polish Jews are blue-eyed, and light-haired, and pale-complected because there were very few Semitic Jews in Poland. How would they get there to make four millions Jews in Poland. No matter how prolific they were, how they followed the commandment to multiply, they couldn't have made more than four million Jews in Poland. But all those guys were Khazarians.

Well, I think that's a very interesting footnote.

Yeah, well, you can read that because there are books about it.

Thank you very much.

A book by Khazarian Jews.