

Good afternoon and welcome to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's First Person program. What the first person program is is each week a survivor of the Holocaust, and somebody who volunteers at the-- a survivor who also volunteers at the museum, comes, stands on the stage, and tells you, for about 40 minutes, what his or her experiences were during 1933 to 1945 period. And that's what we're going to have today. We're going to have one of our survivors who volunteer at the museum speak to us today.

My name is Martin Goldman. I'm director of Survivor Affairs here at the museum. And the Office of Survivor Affairs is one of the offices that are involved in putting this program together.

Other offices are the Intern and Volunteer Office. And that's headed by Joe Greenstein back there in the red sweater. I don't see Andrea Lewis, but Andrea Lewis is with the public programs. And she's really-- actually does all the work in putting these programs together. But she's outside, so I don't have a chance to introduce her.

So welcome to the museum. This happens every Wednesday, 1 o'clock, through the end of August. And then in September it gets a little slow in the museum, and we don't do it.

We didn't, by the way, hold off those chairs as reserved to make sure everybody came forward. We actually expected a large group to come in, and they probably will come in.

And hopefully going to come in quietly, because there's just a couple of things that I'd like to ask one. Is don't, take any flash photography while our speaker is speaking today. And the second thing is, we'll be here until 2 o'clock. Try to stay in your seats until 2 o'clock. Sometimes it's very difficult for the audience to hear and for the speaker to speak when people are getting up and walking about.

If you have tickets for the permanent exhibit, don't worry about it, because even if it says 1:30 or 2 o'clock or whatever, you will be allowed into the permanent exhibit. So you don't have to get up and go for that.

Each of you has, in your hand, a piece of paper that gives a little bit of an historical background of our speaker today, Manya. So I won't go and repeat Manya's background. All I will do is tell you that Manya will speak for 40 minutes. When that 40 minutes are up, I'm going to come back on stage with Manya, and I'm going to field the questions. You'll ask a question for 20-- questions for 20 minutes. You'll ask a question. I'll repeat it, which will make sure that everybody has an opportunity to hear the question, and we'll give Manya your moment to think about an answer for that question.

So I'd like to now introduce you to one of my favorite people in the entire world, my sweetie, Manya Moszkowicz Friedman.

[APPLAUSE]

Well, first, I would like to thank you all for coming to the museum to learn about the Holocaust. The Holocaust is one of the darkest chapters in human history, and it's not something that happened in the Dark Ages. It took place in the 20th century, and was committed by one of the most cultural nations in Europe.

It was a very well planned out and systematically executed thing. Hitler's aim was to eliminate all European Jews. About 5 million known Jews were murdered, and all because they did not fit into their superior race. And among them was 1 and a half million innocent children.

I'm not here to teach you about the Holocaust. You cannot do it in 40 minutes. Nor am I educated. I just am here to share with you some of my own experience during that time as a young girl.

As it was mentioned, I was born in Central Poland in a small town. I lived there with my parents and two younger brothers, and, of course, a host of relatives-- grandparents and some relatives, as to say I was never home alone.

And I lived a normal life. I attended school, public school, in the morning, in the afternoon, Hebrew school. And since it was a small town, the family lived within very close proximity.

Then, a year before the war, for some reason, my parents decided to move to the big city, which happened to be close to the German border. And as you probably know, September the 1st, 1939, Hitler invaded Poland.

That day, my parents and their friends got together to decide what to do. Since we came from Central Poland, they hoped that Hitler won't reach us that far if we go back to that town. And of course, the hope was that the mighty powers, like England and the United States, and even Russia, will not permit Hitler to go that far. Unfortunately, we were wrong.

Well, anyway, they decided, first of all, since it was a small town, they thought Hitler wouldn't bother with us. So they decided to send their wives and children back to our home town, and the men decided to stay, because after all, you can't leave everything behind and walk away. So in the morning, we got up. We dressed in our best clothing and headed for the railroad station.

The place was mobbed because everybody wanted to get out, and we were afraid we'd get separated from Mother. But somehow, Father managed to put us on the train.

We traveled 5 miles, 8 kilometers, to the next town. And the rails were bombed. We had to get off the train, not knowing what to do.

There was a lot of confusion. And Mother decided we should, since it was only 5 miles, we should walk back home.

Of course, we had our packages with provisions. We had to get rid of them. Some people looked at Mother, I think, that she's probably crazy, because she knocked at somebody's door and asked them to take those things from us. She was afraid to leave them in the middle of the street, for being "conspicuous."

And we walked back. We came home tired, exhausted, listless on our feet. But we were happy to be back home in our own bed and be back with Father.

And from that day on, I think our lives just turned upside down, because as I mentioned, since we were close to the German border, September the 4th, Friday, the Germans walked into our city.

Some shots must have been fired by some people. So they took out all the people from that building, even the ones that were hiding in the bunkers, and shot them. The same was repeated in a neighboring street.

And that afternoon, they ordered everybody to step out from the houses. They selected all the Jewish men, walked them to the city hall, and kept them in a windowless, airless basement. And they demanded that the rabbi should step forward or 10 men will be shot.

It so happens the rabbi wasn't among them, but an elderly, Orthodox Jew stepped forward in order to save 10 lives. He said that he was a rabbi. They took them out, beat him up, and threw him back at in, in order to everybody to repeat the mourners' prayers because they all will die.

Well, you can imagine how those people looked, how scared they were and frightened. And in the meantime, the Germans were taking pictures, and filming them, and having a good time watching the frightened Jews.

They kept them overnight. The next morning, they walked them to a nearby factory. They ordered them barbers to go home and get their equipment. And they came back and cut everybody's hair and beards. And for an Orthodox Jew to have his beard cut off is very painful. And that was the first recognition who was a Jew.

They kept people in that place. Some, they let go, some they kept. Some merchants they sent to jail. Some managed to get out for big bribes. Others were executed.

And came almost evening, and our father did not come out. There were a few other people waiting at the gate, hoping, waiting for their loved ones to come out. Of course, we had no idea what happened, and we had to leave because it was curfew time. And we walked behind our mother not knowing what happened to you-- to father.

He did come home late at night. It seems that they detained them to build latrines.

A few days-- a few days later, mother was almost close to the house when two Germans went by and arrested her and a friend from across the street because it was a minute or two past curfew. They were kept in jail, and we at home had no idea what happened to them.

Then, next to us happened to be a very tall building-- well, almost a skyscraper by Polish-- the way it was at the time in Poland. Anyway, several Jewish families lived there. They had to leave and the Germans moved in.

And one of them stopped Father on the street, that he needed flower boxes for his balcony. A few hours later, he came in, drunk, with his gun drawn, and was chasing Father around the kitchen table, and each one of us in a different corner, just waiting for that gun to go off. And it was somehow a miracle that Father managed to talk him out and promised him that the flower boxes will be ready.

And it seems almost every day was a miracle if you survive, because often you got up in the morning and you found out that your neighbors were taken during the night. So that was a miracle that you were still at home.

They also formed a Jewish committee for them to execute all the orders that the Germans had. This way they have clean hands. They gave all the dirty work to the Jewish committee to do.

They collected all the valuables. Jews have to take-- turn in, besides precious metals and so, even radios and bicycles. And even later on, when they started a war with Russia, they even collected ski boots.

Then there was an order that Jewish kids no longer allowed to attend school. They were not even allowed to be tutored at home, if they had to concentrate a few and-- in the same place.

And then the synagogue was burned down. They would not allow the neighbors to go out to extinguish the fire. But the next morning they made them go out and clean up the debris. At first we thought that was a single incident, but as it turned out, the same thing happened in the neighboring town.

Also, since we were close to the German border, our area was right away annexed to Germany. That meant that we could not get around without either passport or some papers. And the Jews from the neighboring, smaller towns, they were brought over to our city because this way it was easier for the Germans to control them.

Then started a separation. It was like a moral separation. Jews had different laws than for the rest of the population.

And then Jews had to move out from the main street, from all the building from the main street. But not only do they have to leave the buildings, they were not even allowed to walk on those main streets. So often, to get from one part of the city to the next, it took quite some time to get along.

It so happened my father got a job in the other side of town. Actually, the city had two parts. It was the city and the old city. He got a job in that old city.

There was a tram, a subway, running especially for Jews. But the hours were not the same as for the rest of the population. And in the meantime, Jewish people also had to wear white armbands embroidered with their blue Star of David.

So when Father sometimes was detained on his job and missed the metro-- oh, not the metro-- the streetcar that was assigned for Jews, he would, at great risk, take off his armband and get on the regular streetcar. And can you imagine us sitting at home and waiting for him to come home, listening to every footstep and peeking out through the curtain until

we saw him. And that's how life was going on.

Then they were giving out ration cards. The allotment on those cards wasn't-- not really enough to survive. Yet Jews were not allowed to have any other provisions in the house except what was allotted on those cards. Sometimes they would stop ladies in the street and examine their handbags to make sure that they don't have something that was not allotted them on those ration cards.

And often, when you were standing in line, if some Nazis went by, they just kicked you out from the line just for fun. And often they were running out of provisions by the time it came to the end.

Then started the deportation. At first, they took young men to send to Germany. And as a matter of fact, the Jewish committee even encouraged young men to volunteer in hope that they just be like promised six weeks, and, in the meantime, they'll save the rest of the population. But of course, like everything else, turned out it wasn't true.

And every time they needed-- they needed people, to deport them, they had a quota. So many people had to be sent away. And you can imagine, sometimes they even took out the sick people from the hospital, or the kids from the orphanages. So you can imagine where those quotas were going.

Then they promised that that's only a resettlement, that they were going to be sent to a better place. At the time, they talked about Theresienstadt, which was in Czechoslovakia. They even said that you can take along so many pounds of-- with you. And you can take cots and blankets and all this. As it turned out, the people went away, and all the baggage was left behind.

Later, we found out where those transports went. They went to Auschwitz. How did we find out? The engineers from the trains came back and told us where those-- where those transports went.

By the end of 1940, about half of the Jewish population from our city was already sent away. So the Jews started thinking of ways to be useful to the Germans, and yet remain at home. They were thinking of making, like, uniforms and boots for the military.

At first the Germans rejected this. They didn't want any suggestion from Jews. But later, they realized they can make a lot of money from bribes, from people that would like to get employment. Or, if they will be needed here, they won't be sent to the front.

So in the beginning of 1941, the first shop opened. I happened to get employment at that shop. But my parents had to give a sewing machine for me to be accepted.

Of course, I must admit, I wasn't much of a seamstress. But I was lucky. I was sitting between two regular seamstresses. And I guess they felt sorry for that little girl between them, because in the shop too we had to make a quota.

So they, for them to finish the quota was not a big deal. So they helped me out, and I made my quota. Lately, I became proficient enough I could do it myself.

The payments-- the pay in those shops was very minimal. You could not survive on it. The only thing was that you got an employment card. The Germans called it a [GERMAN]. We called it a way to life, because right in the beginning, if you had that employment card and you were stopped on the street, they would let you go. But that was just for a short time.

Shortly after, the Jews, instead of the white armbands, which could have been removed, as my father did, the Jews had to wear the yellow Star of David, which was permanently attached, sewn on to the clothing.

As I mentioned that in order to get around, you needed passports or you needed some papers. And there were many people that first left the area but then was coming back from the east, and they needed those papers. Apparently, there were some people that were making those false passports.

Well, once two Jews who were hanged right in the middle of the city. And whoever walked by had-- was stopped to watch them. A few days later, four Jews were hanged. Among them was a father and a son. And I think that night many candles were lit in Jewish homes in their memory.

The work at that shop went on until March 1943. At that time, as our shift was about to leave, and the other shift was waiting down the yard to come up, the SS men surrounded the building, and we were all taken for deportation. At that time, my parents were still home with my two younger brothers. Somehow, my father-- we were five-- my father managed to get four employment cards. And I think that was the reason that we're still-- they were still home.

So they came to that place of deportation, where they kept us. They brought me a suitcase with my personal belongings.

And they were standing. We couldn't communicate much, because I was on the second floor. And anyway, everybody was trying to talk.

But I remember them standing there, and we were just looking at each other, probably with the same thought-- will we ever see each other again?

And right in front of my eyes, I think my parents aged maybe 10 years. And as it happened, that was the last time I saw my parents and my brothers.

From there, we were taken to a temporary camp in Germany. We were at that temporary camp only a few days when the [INAUDIBLE] came to pick us out. And we were taken to a factory. It happened to be a very new factory.

We were producing soot, carbon, things they use to make tires, tar, and even some ammunition. Well, you probably can't imagine how we looked after a day's work-- not only our outside, but even our lungs.

At the beginning, it wasn't too bad, because, as I said, it was a new factory, and it was still private. So we kept still our things from home.

But after two weeks, the SS men took us over. We became a subcamp from Auschwitz. And the camp was surrounded by barbed wire. We got German kapos, Aufsehers, to walk us to work. And everything just changed.

We got those striped dresses and wooden shoes. And the food-- that's the only decision I think we had to make in camp, was when we got a piece of bread, should we eat it now or should we save it for later.

And the same thing was about to-- when they were distributing the soup. Should we try to get ahead in line and make sure we get that bowl of watery soup, or maybe wait for later, and be lucky enough to get-- find a piece of parsnip or potato. But sometimes your luck ran out, because they run out of soup.

Well, besides this, we were also-- they took us to the showers. They cut our hair. They inspected every part of our bodies. And naked, we had to walk in front of a bunch of SS men to have our arms tattooed.

From then on, we were not called anymore by our names but by our numbers. But believe me, they took away much more than our names at that time.

And that's how life was going on in camp until January 1945. That's when the Soviet army was coming closer, and they decided to evacuate.

It seems later on, it seems that our destination was northwest. But since the tracks were bombed we went south. Yes, I remember that I came home in the morning. I worked on the night shift. We came home in the morning. It was a big commotion in the camp, because everybody was talking about the evacuation. They gave us each a blanket and some bread.

My problem was I had a sick friend in the infirmary, my best friend. And I had to make a decision-- should I leave her or should I take her with me? She could not walk on her own strength. She had such a high temperature. So I convinced another girl to help me, and we took her out from the infirmary. But in the meantime, we had to give up some of our provisions.

We got to the railroad station, but the tracks were bombed. There was no train. So we were put up in a barn for the night.

The next morning we went again to the train. We were put in open cars, freight cars, the one like you transport coal. And that was in the middle of January.

I took my friend in a corner of the car because she could not support herself. And the cars were very crowded. So with my arms, I was holding onto the rail, and with my back pushing away the crowd from her being squashed.

And instead, as I said, going north, we went south through Czechoslovakia. The people in Czechoslovakia were very nice. They came to every station, brought bread and water. But the guards would not let them give it to us. Sometimes they even shoot at them.

Once, we stopped at the station. And in the next car happened to be the nurse from our camp. She climbed up on that railing with a tin cup and begged the guard if he could give her some water, because somebody fainted. Instead he pulled out his gun and shot her. And she fell down between the two trains. And I was saying, those trains kept going back and forth because the tracks were bombed. We could see her lay dead, not knowing if she was really dead, was still alive.

Well, the trip in those trains lasted for 10 days, without food or water. The snow that fell on our blankets served to quench our thirst.

After 10 days-- that last leg of the trip I don't even remember, but we wound up in Ravensbrück. We came to-- Ravensbrück was hell. There were so many nationalities. It was so crowded, such terrible sanitation conditions.

We came in the middle of the night, so some of us they could not put in the barracks. They would have to put on the lights. So they put us in the shower. And knowing what "shower" meant, we were just sitting there, I remember, my friend and I, hugging each other, and just waiting for the gas to come out instead of water.

Somehow we managed to sit through the night, because in the morning, at dawn, we could see through cracks and the shades light coming, and we realized we survived the night. Then they put us in the barracks. And as I mentioned, it was very crowded.

Every morning we had to get up at dawn to be counted and recounted, so many times. The numbers somehow never matched. But in the meantime, to go to the washroom, I remember there was, in the middle, like a round fountain with dripping water. All could do is put out your hand to get a few drops of water and apply it to your face, and hope to wake up.

But in the meantime, you also stepped over corpses, people that expired during the night.

I wasn't long in Ravensbrück. From there I was sent to a smaller camp, Rechlin. Over there, there was a small airfield. We mostly camouflaged the planes and fixed the runway when it broke down. And when the houses were bombed, we cleaned the bricks and things like this.

And it seemed to us that maybe the war will end soon, because there were constantly air raids. The Germans that were watching us were usually-- they were, at the time, already elderly Germans or young people that came back from the war invalid. Every time there was an air raid, they would hide their heads and lay on the ground, and we were just laying with our eyes wide open hoping that something is going to happen. We really didn't care one way or the other, but an end to the misery.

One day, as we were standing in the morning to be counted, somebody came up and picked out about a dozen or so girls, and told us-- I was among them-- told us to step forward. We were marched to the camp gate. Outside was waiting a white-covered truck.

The kapos mentioned to us to get into their truck, but of course, although the tailgate was down, we had a very hard time climbing up. And to our amazement-- I thought we were hallucinating-- the kapos actually helped us to climb up into the truck. Later, we realized why.

Well, that truck kept on going with us, resigned, not knowing where to, because a selection in camp never meant a better life.

While we were in the trucks, we were also given care packages. I thought-- those packages were provided, I think, by the Canadians. We ripped them open, not knowing what was inside, or not caring if it was even poison.

It was food. So we ripped them open. And there was powdered milk, and cocoa, and sardines. And so we ate it all at once, not knowing what we were eating. Some of the girls got sick because we were not used to it. And we kept on going on in those-- in that truck, not knowing where to, until we landed in Denmark.

The Danish people were very nice. They were waiting for us with food and a place to rest. And then we were taken by a small boat to Sweden.

As it turned out-- we were not aware of it at the time-- but that white truck was from the Swedish Red Cross. At the time, there was this Swedish count, Folke Bernadotte. He negotiated with Himmler, the head of the Gestapo, to release the Norwegian and Danish POWs. But since that was already the end of April, and Himmler realized that Germany has lost the war. So he agreed-- he agreed to Bernadotte's suggestion that he should release some of the women prisoners of Polish descent. And that's how we managed to get to Sweden.

Of course, it was hard to-- we just couldn't comprehend that we are free, because at night-- they put us up in a school-- but at night you always saw people standing at the-- a girl standing at the window looking out to make sure we are not in camp anymore.

And the next day they made a meal. One night, the students came running up, shouting, the war was over, the war was over. We ran out in our underwear not realizing that we didn't have any pajamas or nightgowns. But we didn't care. We hugged and kissed. The war is over.

Well, the war was over. And I hoped that, since I survived, some of my relatives, parents also. My mother was only 37 when the war started. As it turned out, I was the only one from the family that survived.

Well, some of you probably may wonder, why we do this after all? Every time we talk about the Holocaust, is like reliving the horrors of the past. I personally could not talk about it till a few years ago. But then I realized that we are the only ones that can bear witness, no matter-- no matter how painful it is. And our number, unfortunately, is diminishing almost daily.

Actually, no one can fully describe the indescribable. We are just trying to convey to you what hatreds, and bigotry, discrimination, and brutality can do. September 11, unfortunately gave us an example what another madman spreading hate and disregard for human lives can do.

Our hope is, after you learn about the Holocaust and listen to survivors' testimonies, you will be more tolerant to each other. Teach your children tolerance, and make some commitment to help to prevent such atrocities to happen again.

Our hope is especially in the young people. You are our hope for the future.

We live in such a great Democratic country, the best country in the world. With all its shortcomings, it's still the best

country in the world. So do not take things for granted. Use your potentials to make this country even better.

And do not judge people by the color of their eyes, or the shape of their nose, or their ethnic backgrounds, or their religious beliefs. Be tolerant. And do not get distracted by groups that promote prejudice and hate.

Recently, I was with another survivor at a camp in Kentucky, a military camp. And while there, I noticed that their state motto is "United we stand, divided we fall." This is not Kentucky, but maybe we can use that motto.

So let us use that motto, and stand united to prevent another Holocaust. Never again. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

She has agreed to take some questions for the next few minutes. So if anybody has any questions, please raise your hand. I'm going to-- yes, ma'am.

Yes. I'm so sorry. I usually make a note, because every time, if I don't mention it, people ask me about my question. Yes, she survived. She lives in Israel. I have visited her six times. She was here once. And she always tells my kids about me.

[SOBS]

Yes, ma'am. Question is, Manya, did you ever lose faith in God?

Not lose faith in God, but I constantly had discussions with God, except he never answered me. I constantly wanted to know why, especially when it came to those babies being thrown from mothers' arms and thrown into the cars. Because no matter what, when you suffer, you always turn to God.

Yes, ma'am.

[INAUDIBLE]

From my extended family? I was just thinking this morning. From my mother's side, one, and four cousins survived. From my father's side, only one cousin survived.

Manya, may I ask you a question?

Mm-hmm.

Could you tell us a little bit about when the story, excuse me, when your memory was finished, you were in Sweden. Tell us a little bit about how you came to the United States.

Well, being-- being in Sweden, I was considered a Polish citizen. So I had to wait for the Polish quota, which took five and a half years. That's when I came. That's all you wanted to know?

But you met a-- you met a man and married him.

Yes, I met a man--

[LAUGHTER]

--and married him. I have two children. And, well, I went through a lot already since then. My husband died young. It's 27 years since he died. I never remarried.

My son married a lovely girl. He had a four and a half year old child when his wife died. So we went through a lot since

then.

But we came to this country. We built a new life.

The reason I didn't talk, maybe, nobody asked me that question, right, but I'm going to explain it anyways. When I came to this country, people meant well. I don't mean to say. But everybody was telling us, forget about the past. You are now in a golden country. Start anew.

We did starting, like, anew. But the Holocaust, like a shadow, follows us around, even to this day.

When I married, one cousin was at my wedding. When my child was born, it so happened there was a hurricane here. And the neighbors called my husband in the hospital. He has to come home because the shingles from the roof are lifting up, and we had to wipe the water on the attic.

I was sharing a room with another lady. She had so many people visiting-- grandparents, and parents, and aunts, and uncles, that her husband came over to my bed to sit with me, because nobody was visiting me.

When my son get married, by that time my husband had already passed away. The photographer was sitting, waiting, because the bride's family had grandparents, and parents, and sisters, and brothers. So he was sitting at the table waiting for the rest of the groom's family to come. It was only my daughter and myself.

So that's what I mean, that the Holocaust follows us around. Because it's only part-- all this is still part from the Holocaust. Anything?

Yes, sir.

[INAUDIBLE]

What was the most horrifying thing that ever happened to her? That was your question?

Oh, it's hard to tell. So many things happened. But recently, what it comes often to my mind, I guess, is that time working as a young girl. Don't forget. That was so many years ago. Where children were children.

Now I was 13 when the war started. Now, 13 years old are sophisticated young ladies. In those days were children. And to walk naked in front of the SS men, it still hurts.

But there were other-- there was constantly something. You can't really-- because it was constantly horrifying, and constantly-- you never knew what the next moment is going to bring.

And sometimes we really didn't care if it ends. At least the suffering would end. You understand?

Yes, sir.

[INAUDIBLE]

The question is, does she-- does Manya know how many survivors came to the United States after the war, and whether she has any suggestions as to how this museum could be improved or changed?

I don't know how many came. This, I'm not a scholar, so there probably are statistics about this. Sorry, I can't answer that question.

As far as the museum, to me personally, that museum is also a monument to all those that perished, because we don't even know where to-- when to light a candle, or where our folks, parents or so, are buried. We don't know. So this is, in a way, to me personally, like a monument.

But don't forget, that's not just a monument made of brick and mortar. It's a learning center. There's so much that you can learn here and find out about the Holocaust. And I really don't know how it can be improved. I never thought about it.

Yes, ma'am.

[INAUDIBLE]

Of course. I meant-- yeah, I'm sorry. Go ahead. [INAUDIBLE] [LAUGHS]

[INAUDIBLE]

[INAUDIBLE] asks, what is the day like? Could you please describe what a day was like at Auschwitz?

Yeah.

Well, I wasn't in Auschwitz. That was a subcamp of Auschwitz.

But still, you wake up in the morning when it's still dark in the wintertime. In the wintertime, you just have that striped dress. You were standing at roll call for hours. As I mentioned before, they could never get the numbers right. We were count by one of the kapos, and other kapos. And standing, sometimes girls would faint from exhaustion.

--if she would fall down. And in the winter time, we were shivering in those dresses. I sometimes mention, if I managed to rinse out my underwear the night before, it was often still damp in the morning. You still have to put it on.

Then you were walked, supervised by a kapo, walked to work. And if you mentioned this to somebody next to you, or so, and the kapo saw you, they didn't spare the whip. And then, when you got to work, whatever job you had to do you had to do.

Often, it so happens in that first camp we were, we were with a group of people, men, both Frenchmen and Polish men, that were not as in concentration camp. They could go home every few weeks. And it so happened there was one from our hometown that used to go home, and then come back and tell us about the situation in the ghettos.

And when we heard it, sometimes we would say we didn't want to work. We gave up. But if you didn't work, you knew the whip is going to come down.

And as I said, we were always hungry, starving. As a matter of fact, some of the ladies, married ladies, always used to talk about recipes what they used to cook or what they would-- when you're hungry. And that's where they went home.

And you hardly-- I had to-- you always had to stay in lines. There were always lines. Go to the restroom, were lines to go to get a ground, which they called coffee. Sometimes it tasted like the soup from the night before because they didn't wash out the kettles. But there were always lines. A lot of your day was standing in lines, or being counted.

And then, going home from work, they often inspected you. If, god forbid, somebody gave you maybe something and you carried it home. That was life.

[INAUDIBLE]

I don't know.

Manya, Wednesday is Manya's day to volunteer at the museum. And she's anxious to go in to volunteer. But she said she will hang around for a few minutes if anyone would like to come up and to ask her a question personally.

Thank you very much for coming. If you're in town next week at 1 o'clock, we'll be back here. So please come and participate in the First Person program. Thank you very much.

Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

She has agreed to take some questions for the next few minutes. So if anybody has any questions, please raise your hand. I'm going to-- yes, ma'am.

[INAUDIBLE]

Yes, I'm so sorry. I usually make a note because every time, if I don't mention it, people ask me about my question. Yes, she survived. She lives in Israel. I have visited her six times. She was here once. And she always tells my kids about me.

[SOBS]

Yes, ma'am.

[INAUDIBLE]

Question is, Manya, did you ever lose faith in God?

Not lose faith in God, but I constantly had discussions with God, except he never answered me. I constantly wanted to know why, especially when it came to this babies being torn from mothers' arms and thrown into the cars. Because no matter what, when you suffer, you always turn to God.

Yes, ma'am.

[INAUDIBLE]

From my extended family? I was just thinking this morning. From my mother's side, one, and four cousins survived. From my father's side, only one cousin survived.

Manya, may I ask you a question?

Yes.

Could you tell us a little bit about from the story-- excuse me-- when your memory was finished, you were in Sweden. Tell us a little bit about how you came to the United States.

Well, being a-- being in Sweden, I was considered a Polish citizen. So I had to wait for the Polish quota, which took five and a half years. That's when I came. Is that all you wanted to know?

Well, you met a-- you met a man, and married him.

Yes, I met a man--

[LAUGHTER]

--and married him. I have two children. And-- well, I went through a lot already since then. My husband died young. It's 27 years since he died. I never remarried.

My son married a lovely girl. He had a four and a half year old child when his wife died. So we went through a lot since then.

But we came to this country. We built a new life.

The reason I didn't talk, maybe, nobody asked me that question right, but I'm going to explain it anyways. When I came to this country, people meant well. I don't mean to say-- but everybody was telling us, forget about the past. You are now in a golden country. Start anew. We did starting, like anew.

But the Holocaust, like a shadow, follows us around, even to this day. When I married, one cousin was at my wedding. When my child was born, it so happened there was a hurricane here, and the neighbors called my husband in the hospital. He has to come home because the shingles from the roof were lifting up. And he had to wipe the water on the attic.

I was sharing a room with another lady. She had so many people visiting-- grandparents, and parents, and aunts and uncles-- that her husband came over to my bed to sit with me, because nobody was visiting me.

When my son gets married, by that time, my husband had already passed away. The photographer was sitting, waiting, because the bride's family had grandparents and parents, and sisters and brothers. So he was sitting at the table waiting for the rest of the groom's family to come. It was only my daughter and myself.

So that's what I mean, that the Holocaust follows us around. Because it's only part-- all this is still part from the Holocaust.

Anything?

Yes, sir.

[INAUDIBLE]

What was the most horrifying thing that ever happened to her? That was your question?

Oh, it's hard to tell. So many things happened. But recently what it comes often to my mind, I guess, is that time working as a young girl. Don't forget, that was so many years ago, where children were children.

Now I was 13 when the war started. Now, 13 years olds are sophisticated young ladies. In those days were children. And to walk naked in front of the SS men, it still hurts.

But there were other-- there was constantly something. You can't, really-- because it was constantly horrifying and constantly-- you never knew what the next moment is going to bring.

And sometimes we really didn't care if it ends. At least the suffering would end. You understand?

Yes, sir.

[INAUDIBLE]

The question is, does she-- does Manya know about how many survivors came to the United States after the war, and whether she has any suggestions as to how this museum can be improved or changed?

Well, I don't know how many came. This, I'm not a scholar, so there probably are statistics about this. Sorry, I can't answer that question.

As far as the museum, to me, personally, that museum is also a monument to all those that perished, because we don't even know where to-- when to light a candle, or where our folks, parents, or so are buried. We don't know. So this is, in a way, to me personally, like a monument.

But don't forget, that's not just a monument made of brick and mortar. It's a learning center. There's so much that you can learn here and find out about the Holocaust. And I really don't know how it can be improved. I never thought about it.

Yes, ma'am.

[INAUDIBLE]

Of course. I meant-- yeah, I'm sorry. Go ahead. [INAUDIBLE] [LAUGHS]

[INAUDIBLE]

[INAUDIBLE] asks, what is the day like? Could you please describe what a day was like at Auschwitz?

Yeah. Well, I wasn't in Auschwitz. That was a subcamp of Auschwitz.

But still, you wake up in the morning, when it's still dark, in the wintertime. In the wintertime you just have that striped dress. You were standing at roll call for hours. As I mentioned before, they could never get the numbers right. We were count by one of the kapos, and other kapos. And standing, sometimes girls would faint from exhaustion.

--if she would fall down. And in the wintertime, we were shivering in those dresses. I sometimes mentioned, if I managed to rinse out my underwear the night before, it was often still damp in the morning. You still had to put it on.

Then you were walked, supervised by a kapo, walked to work. And if you mention this to somebody next to you or so, and the kapo saw it, they didn't pare the whip. And then, when you got to work, whatever job you had to do you had to do.

Often, it so happens in that first camp we were we were with a group of people, men, both Frenchmen and Polish men, that were not as in concentration camp. They could go home every few weeks. And it so happened there was one from our hometown that used to go home and then come back and tell us about the situation in the ghettos.

And when we heard that, sometimes we would say we didn't want to work. We gave up. But if you didn't work, you knew the whip is going to come down.

And as I said, we were always hungry, starving. As a matter of fact, some of the ladies, married ladies, always used to talk about recipes, what they used to cook or what they would-- when you're hungry, you-- and that's where they went home.

And you hardly-- I had to-- you always had to stay in lines. There were always lines to go to the restroom. Were lines to go to get a ground, which they called coffee. Sometimes it tasted like the soup from the night before because they didn't wash out the kettles. But there were always lines. A lot of your day was standing in lines or being counted.

And then, going home from work, they often inspected you, if, god forbid somebody gave you maybe something and you carried it home. That was life.

[INAUDIBLE]

I don't know.

Wednesday is Manya's day to volunteer at the museum, and she's anxious to go in to volunteer. But she said she will hang around for a few minutes if anyone would like to come up and to ask her a question personally.

Thank you very much for coming. If you're in town next week at 1 o'clock, we'll be back here. So please come and

participate in the First Person program. Thank you very much.

Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]