

What you're being given, you're given a feedback form that we would love for you to fill out for us because we do tell our survivor comments that you say. And it's really important for us to receive those comments.

And then underneath of it is a very brief. We call it an ID card. It's identification information about our speaker for today, who is Charlene Schiff. All right?

We do First Person every Wednesday at 1:00, and it features the survivor's testimony. And we define a survivor as someone who lived through the Holocaust. It's a very broad definition. This season First Person has been generously funded by the Helena Rubinstein Foundation.

The program will last an hour. So if you have passes for the permanent exhibition, those passes will be honored after this program. So if you have 1:15 or 1 o'clock, they'll be honored at 2:00.

So remember, what we want you to do is, once the program begins, please stay. It's our way of honoring the speaker who is speaking to us, giving us something that's very important-- a very important experience to her. So we ask that you stay. So those tickets that you have for the permanent exhibition will be honored any time after the hour printed on your ticket.

We also ask that you hold your questions for the end. We will spend about 10, 15 minutes or so answering all of those questions. So listen very carefully, and think along as our survivor shares her experience.

As I said, our speaker is Charlene Schiff. What you're looking at is you're looking at a composite picture of Charlene's family-- her mother, sister, and her father at the end. And on the right-hand corner there is actually would be-- yes, it's your right. Hot dogs, I did that correctly. That is Charlene's European name.

Charlene was the youngest of two daughters. And she was born in Poland December 16, 1929. She was born in the town of Horochow. I hope I'm saying that correctly.

The picture that you're looking at is the picture of her hometown. And in the background is the wooden synagogue that is of great significance to Charlene.

In September of 1939, Germany invaded Poland. And three weeks later, the Soviet Union occupied the eastern part of Poland. And that's right in the location of where Charlene's town was.

Under Soviet rule, Charlene's life did not change a great deal. The most important change that she remembered was having to speak Russian in school.

However, in 1941, Germany invaded the USSR and set up a ghetto in Charlene's town.

When they heard rumors that the ghetto was about to be destroyed, Charlene and her mother fled. They hid submerged in waters of a nearby river all night as machine-gun fire rang out from the ghetto.

By morning, others were hiding in the river as well. And when asked by guards to come out of hiding, Charlene and her mother disregarded the orders and remained in the river.

For several days, Charlene and her mother stayed in the waters, and they sometimes dozed off. One time when Charlene awoke, her mother had vanished. Unable to establish the whereabouts of her mother, Charlene spent the rest of the war living in the forests near her hometown.

Charlene now will come and tell us more about her experience. Ladies and gentlemen, may I present Charlene Schiff.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you so much for your kind introduction, Andrea. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I want to tell you how much I appreciate your being here. I know time is a very precious commodity. And I appreciate your giving me your time.

It is difficult to speak about any subject these days without referring to the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001. We are nearing the first anniversary of this dreadful event, and in my mind it is as if it happened yesterday.

As I watched in utter horror the events in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania, my thoughts went back to the Holocaust. I realized there was a common denominator in these two tragedies, and its name is hate. I am not comparing terrorism to the Holocaust, but it is sad and disturbing to see the terrible results of different forms of hate on humanity.

As a result, bridges of understanding and tolerance are being built by a united and patriotic America. We are strong in our determination and resolve to have peace, and to understand and respect people of different religions and cultures.

Ours is a peace-loving nation. But when necessary, and war is the only answer, we do not hesitate to defend our freedoms with all we have and with all our might. Our military, second to none, stands tall and proud, giving our country its all.

We must win. Our cause is just. We're not looking for expansion or conquest. We are looking to preserve our precious freedoms and human rights for all citizens of our great country.

At this time, I feel it is imperative to address also the tragic situation in the Middle East, where innocent blood has been spilling on a daily basis. There are promising signs this week of a letup in violence. We hope and pray for a peaceful solution to this senseless loss of life.

For many years, I searched within my soul to find the reason for my survival. Alas, I have yet to come up with an answer. But I do know I must bear witness. This is a mandate-- my mission and duty to the millions whose voice was silenced before their time.

The world that I knew and loved so received a death sentence only because it was a Jewish world. Somehow I received a life sentence. I feel imprisoned by my memories, by my past, and destined never to break free from that prison. But I must speak out for all those who never had a chance.

It's not easy to do. Time does not diminish the pain. It's like a wound that never heals.

Allow me to share with you some of my experiences during the unprecedented tragedy that befell mankind in the 20th century. My parents, older sister, and I lived in a small town in Eastern Poland. My father was a professor at the University of Lvov, and both my parents were civic leaders involved in helping the entire community-- not just the Jews.

All sorts of meetings, recitals, poetry readings took place in our home. The door was always open and everyone was welcome.

When the war started, I was nine years old. Poland was partitioned, with the eastern part going to the Soviet Union and the western part controlled by Germany. The Soviets came in with a lot of fanfare, but little bloodshed.

I did not see any major changes in our lifestyle. My father still kept his position at the university, and my older sister and I continued with school. The official language became Russian instead of Polish, but that is really not a problem in Eastern Europe. Most people are bi- or trilingual out of necessity. The borders change so very often that one has to speak more than one language.

In the summer of 1941, the agreement between Hitler and Stalin was broken. The Germans started advancing in pursuit of their evil goals. Our town was overrun by the Germans almost immediately. They came in with their tanks, artillery, [INAUDIBLE] columns of foot soldiers. The local populace greeted them with flowers and cheers.

Within the very first days, the Germans rounded up about 300 Jewish leaders, my father among them. They had a list with names, obviously supplied by our neighbors and former friends. Confusion and chaos ensued.

Every day, the Germans issued new decrees. They demanded all our precious material possessions-- gold, silver, radios, furs, Persian rugs. They burned all our synagogues, all the prayer books, and all the Torahs.

This wooden synagogue that you saw on before was-- the picture of that wooden synagogue was actually taken in the early 1920s before I was born. But it was put in a book with all the other famous wooden synagogues. And that's the way I did get it, courtesy of a dear friend of mine who was visiting Sweden and found the book with the wooden synagogues in it. And that's the only reason I have it now. But the Germans burned it, along with all the other, or most of the other wooden synagogues.

We were ordered to wear a yellow Star of David on the front and back of our clothing.

One day, a van pulled up in front of our house, and several Germans burst in looking for my father's private library. They carried out all the rare books, among them some priceless first editions. My father's library was known as one of the finest in the entire area. Local people must have told the Germans about it.

Soon afterwards, we were given an hour or so to get ready. We were herded into the poorest section of town and assigned a space to live. We took along only what we could carry and had to leave all else behind.

And so the ghetto was established. The area was completely enclosed, barbed wire reinforcing high fences. Two gates were our only way to the outside. A permit was needed to enter or exit the ghetto.

Adults and children 14 years or older were ordered to slave labor each morning, and marched back into the ghetto in the evening. Often, they would come home black and blue from beatings they endured during work.

Those who worked received a meager food ration. Children like me received no food at all. Mother and sister shared with me what little they received.

Mother, sister, and I shared a room with three other families. We had to build bunk beds, as there was not enough room on the floor to accommodate everyone. Straw served as mattresses. The house held about 100 people, and we all shared one very primitive kitchen and one very primitive bathroom.

Slowly and systematically, we were completely stripped of all human dignity.

A Judenrat was formed, a committee of Jewish men who represented the community and acted on our behalf with the Germans. They had to satisfy every whim of the Germans and they had to carry out all their orders.

In the beginning, my mother and several other women organized a clandestine school for children too young to work. The school was held in an old warehouse in the ghetto. Somehow, the women were able to obtain crayons, some books, paper, and pencils. We read stories, sang songs, and colored with bits of crayon. We looked forward to these evening activities, which took our minds off the gnawing hunger we felt all the time.

Soon, the money and jewelry to barter for school supplies ran out, and the school fell apart.

Every now and then, at least once a week, there were unexpected roundups. People were grabbed before, during, or after work. They were put in a truck and never heard from again.

Morale was sagging in the ghetto. There were no newspapers, no mail, no radios, no telephones. We were completely cut off from the outside world.

Much against my mother's wishes, I would sneak out of the ghetto when she and my sister were at work. A group of

children got together, and we dug a hole, sort of like a tunnel, that was ingeniously covered. That hole, under the fence, led to the outside.

Now and then we were able to obtain some food and sneak back into the ghetto. To get caught, one paid with one's life. But hunger is a rather strong motivator. I must add, proudly, that no child ever gave away the location of that tunnel.

I remember one incident in particular. I bought two eggs from a peasant for a gold and ruby ring. I tried to get back to the ghetto through the camouflaged opening, but before I reached it, I was caught. The Ukrainian guard found the eggs, threw them on the sidewalk, and rubbed my face in them. He yelled at me to get back where I belonged and never to come out again.

He was one of the kindhearted guards. My bloody face healed, and I had my life.

Several days later, one of my playmates was caught and murdered trying to bring back a half a loaf of bread. She was not quite 11 years old. The Germans left her body on display for several days as an example.

Conditions in the ghetto continued to deteriorate. People were dying from starvation, from disease, from cold, and from sheer hopelessness. Dead bodies were piled up in the streets for days.

In my mind, I can still see them. The innocence and purity of their souls transcended the stench and filth around them. I speak for each one of them. I cannot allow the world to forget.

By early spring, the Germans decided to move the Jews to a smaller area, since the population dwindled considerably. That section of town hadn't been occupied in several years, and the houses were in great disrepair. Some of the houses bordered a river which separated our town from a neighboring village. Fences and barbed wire were installed on three sides, and the new ghetto became enclosed as the old one was, except there was no fence along the river. We were lucky, and we were assigned a space with several other families in a house right on the river.

Rumors started flying that the ghetto would be liquidated in the summer. My mother and sister continued their slave labor outside the ghetto. Mostly mother was digging ditches and fixing roads. My sister had the good fortune to be reassigned to a huge warehouse knitting articles of clothing for the German soldiers.

Mother had some contacts on the outside, and she tried desperately to find a farmer who would hide the three of us. Unable to do so, she did finally locate two places. One farmer was willing to hide one person, and the other, two people. It was decided, or my mother decided in her infinite wisdom, that my sister, who was four years older than I, she would go into the single hiding place, and mother and I would go to the other place when the time was right.

Early in August 1942, the signs became ominous. The number of Germans and Ukrainians increased considerably.

One morning, I said goodbye to my terrific big sister before she and mother went off to work. We planned to keep in touch while in hiding. My sister was to go right from work to the place mother secured for her.

A day or two later, when mother returned from work, we ate our meager meal and started getting ready to escape from the ghetto. Mother told me to put on my best clothes and shoes and to take an extra set of clothing with me. She packed a small bundle for herself and one for me, and she gave me all sorts of instructions how to get to the farmer's place. But I knew how to get to the farmer because we used to buy dairy products from him before the war.

It was rather scary as I held tightly onto Mother's hand and we walked out into the stillness of the dark night. Soon we were in the river.

Suddenly, shots rang out. We ducked and hid in the bulrushes. The shots were sporadic, but we couldn't move. It was very quiet in between, and any sound would have given us away.

Early in the morning, other people also tried to reach the river. The sound of machine guns was more regular now. We

heard the guards yelling, crawl out, Jew. We can see you. And in Ukrainian, [SPEAKING UKRAINIAN].

We heard babies crying and screams coming from the ghetto. Mother gave me some soggy bread and it tasted awful. But she insisted that I had to eat it to keep strong.

We stayed in the river for several days. We saw fire and smoke coming from the ghetto. The cries and screams continued. The bullets were whizzing by seemingly from every direction.

I kept dozing off, and lost track of time. Suddenly, I woke up, and mother was nowhere in sight.

I became numb with fear. I don't think I moved for the rest of that day. By then, it became all quiet.

I knew I had to make my way to the farm, which was in a neighboring village. Certainly, mother would be waiting there for me. I crossed the river and walked most of that night.

When I reached the familiar farm, I was led into the barn. I asked the farmer where my mother was. He said he hadn't seen her. He told me he'd let me stay the day, and then I must go, or else he'd report me to the authorities.

I pleaded with him to allow me to wait just until Mother would show up. He refused to listen to me. Hanging from his coveralls and looking strangely out of place was my father's gold pocket watch and chain.

When night fell, the farmer's wife gave me some bread and an apple, and sent me away. I was dazed and too confused to comprehend what was happening. But this was the beginning of my odyssey.

I felt I let my mother down. She couldn't wake me when it was time to leave. She probably ran into the forest, where she was waiting for me. That area of Poland abounds with forests, and so, logically, that's where I started searching for her--only what looked very near was usually quite far. It took all night to reach the nearest forest.

I covered myself with leaves and grass, and tried to make some sense out of my situation. I felt so utterly alone. I had to find my mother.

There was no more bread, and the apple was long gone. What was I going to eat? Where was I going to sleep? Who would take care of me? I had to find forests that were close to villages where I could sneak into a garden or barn and get some food, then return to the forest the same night for cover.

Meanwhile, the days turned into weeks, the weeks into months. The first few months, I met other stragglers from neighboring towns. They all had similar stories to tell. They were also in ghettos, and escaped as the ghettos were being liquidated.

I had many close calls, but one incident is riveted in my mind, since it involved others as well. There were seven of us at the edge of a forest, where we ran into each other. We tried to share helpful information about other survivors, about the area, where to get food.

Then, suddenly, we were spotted by a group of children. "Jews," they yelled with glee, and ran back to the village. There was a small monetary reward for reporting a Jew.

This particular forest had sparse underbrush, so it wasn't very good for hiding. We ran into the fields. It was harvest time. There were huge haystacks around, and we all hid in one of them. Why we hid in one haystack, I cannot explain.

When the villagers and kids came looking for us, it didn't take long for them to zero in on the one haystack. They came with pitchforks and made a game of it. They repeatedly stabbed the haystack, laughing and joking among themselves.

By the time they tired of their play, I was the only one left alive. They lined up the six mutilated bodies in a neat row, removing their shoes and clothing. Obviously, they thought they got us all.

That night, I walked all night long, and was still in the same forest. There was nowhere to hide. When dawn came, I climbed up a tree and stayed there all day long. Good thing, too, as there was a lot of activity around-- Germans and Ukrainians all over the place.

Another time, I met a group of Ukrainian partisans, but they wouldn't let me join, because I was a Jew. I was to leave that night. But before I did, I appropriated some boots. One was two sizes larger than the other, but no matter. A shawl, an overcoat, some food, and matches.

And so my odyssey continued. I walked from forest to forest in search of my mother. During three winters and two years in the forests, I was all alone, except for the encounters the first couple of months.

My carefree, early childhood in a small town did not prepare me for survival in the dark, damp forests of Poland. But the will to live is a great teacher.

My first objective was to avoid confrontations with humans who would either kill me or turn me into the authorities. The second was how and where to obtain some food so I would not starve to death. Much of the time, hunger forced me to take chances which were in contradiction to my first objective.

I had to learn directions without a compass so I wouldn't end up going around in circles. Another problem was how to start a fire without matches. Rubbing two damp stones together was exhausting, and most of the time did not produce the expected results. Out of sheer desperation and indescribable hunger, I started eating insects, worms, and the like.

When the cold weather set in, and snow covered the ground, new problems arose. Footprints were a dead giveaway. Protecting myself from the cold was very difficult. In addition, dogs in the villages were always eager to announce my presence by barking loudly, and in some instances by biting ferociously.

In spite of seemingly insurmountable obstacles and challenges, I managed to persevere day by day. Everything and everyone was my enemy. Every minute of every day and night was filled with terror. I had many narrow escapes, but against all odds, I did survive. I cheated death, which was always one step behind me.

And now I'd like to tell you about kindness and caring that I did not find until I was liberated, literally stepped upon by Soviet soldiers.

It seemed whatever strength I had left slowly ebbed away. The forest was dense. I hadn't eaten in many a day. It was penetratingly cold and wintry. I had to find something to eat.

My blistered feet were bleeding through the wet rags, but I walked and walked until I reached the edge of the forest before it got light. Darkness was my only cover.

There was a village nearby, but I knew in my weakened condition I couldn't reach it and return in time. I did locate a potato cellar, where farmers stored potatoes, carrots, and cabbages for the winter. I got in slowly, felt my way around-- no vegetables left. There were empty potato sacks. I picked up a few to protect me from the raw wind and cold.

I climbed up dejectedly and started back towards the forest. I wrapped the sacks around me and felt something soft in one of them. Eagerly, I reached in and found a small animal. I tore off part of it, ate it, and kept walking.

By the time I reached the forest, I was quite exhausted. In my confusion, I couldn't find the shallow pit where I spent the week before. I had to dig a new one with my bare hands.

I was getting ill and couldn't camouflage the pit properly. I covered myself with wet leaves, pine needles, and the empty potato sacks. Nausea and excruciating cramps wracked my body. Everything was spinning around. I felt that was the end.

In a sense, it was a relief. No more struggling. Finally, I would find peace. Dreams of ever finding my family burst like a bubble. And I wondered, will anybody know I ever existed?

I have no idea how long it was before the Soviet soldiers found me. I am told I was close to death, but I do not remember any of this. The soldiers put me on a truck, transferred me into several different tents, cleaned me up, and then, after about a week, put me in a hospital in the city of Luck. All this, I was told much later.

I was weak and had trouble keeping food down. For about a month after regaining consciousness, I did not speak. I vaguely remember people talking in different languages, but it was all a jumble to me.

One day, a young woman who was helping on the ward started humming a familiar tune. It was a song my mother used to sing to me. Suddenly, a torrent of words spilled from my lips. I regained my speech. That was the beginning of my physical recovery.

I tried to trace back who actually saved my life, who cleaned me up, who put me in the hospital with a note-- "Treat her gently with great care, she's a child of the forests"-- but was unable to come up with names. All I know, they were part of a Soviet division advancing against the Germans. Several soldiers literally stepped on me and, realizing I was still alive, carried me to their field hospital.

These were truly acts of great kindness and caring. They could have just left me there. No one would have known the difference.

My plea to you, dear friends-- together we must fight what I call the four evil eyes-- the evils of indifference, ignorance, injustice, and intolerance. These evils are as pertinent today as they were 60 years ago. It seems we have not learned from our past mistakes.

When I speak to students, our young people, our dearest treasure, I stress that our nation is like a tapestry of many colors, different cultures together, all privileged to enjoy the same freedoms, and that they are our future and our hope. In their generation, we look forward to that tapestry to blend in perfectly, like a beautiful, colorful mosaic in harmony and peace, free of hatred, bigotry, and prejudice. My ardent wish-- may their generation and our great country serve as an example and beacon for the entire world.

And now a few words about this museum and what it means to me. This museum is a memorial to the millions who perished, a moral voice, an institution of higher learning. It stands as a powerful witness of genocide born of racial hatred. When the last survivor is no longer here, this institution will be a constant reminder and a Warning to those who tamper with human rights. It's a place of remembrance, reflection, and renewal.

I'm especially moved when I go up to the fourth floor, where, on the glass wall of the walkway, the name of my town, Horochow, is engraved among many other lost Jewish communities. It is one tangible connection to my past.

I never found any of my family. I was told my father was taken to the concentration camp in Dachau. Later, I found out differently. Apparently, the 300 leaders were led outside my town and shot after digging their own mass grave.

Someone denounced my sister, and after parading her naked, she was murdered.

No one knows anything about my mother. I have nothing tangible to mourn, and there is no closure to my grief.

This is just a microcosm of the Holocaust. To realize its magnitude, consider the fact that of 5,000 Jews in my small town of Horochow, there were only two survivors. And one of them stands before you now, bearing witness and remembering sadly. My friend, the other survivor, passed away April 29 of this year.

In conclusion, I'd like to read a poem I wrote in 1992. And after that, I'll be open to questions. The poem's title is "Wings of My Youth."

"Wings of my youth, wasted, misspent. Carry me back to that beautiful land where the world is sane and there is no pain, where the sun on everyone beams, and granted our unfulfilled dreams.

Wings of my childhood, wings of my youth, crushed and crumpled underfoot. You never had a chance to soar, lost to Hitler's demonic war.

The chimneys of Auschwitz stand tall and mute. To tell their story, if only they could. The smell of burning flesh and bone turns my aching heart into stone.

6 million souls, martyrs are all. Their silence to me a thundering call to bear witness and never forget the unspeakable horror my people has met."

Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

I hope everyone heard that question the lady asked, that I mentioned that the only kindness I found was from the Soviet soldiers. And she wondered if there were no people in my area who were willing to help.

Unfortunately, it is a puzzle that I could never solve to this day. But no, I did not find any kindness, or any caring in my area, which really is very, very sad to me.

This question is probably no longer [INAUDIBLE]. I find it difficult that it really [INAUDIBLE].

Thank you. I don't know how to answer that question, except that to this day, I question my reason for survival. Why did I survive? I had nothing to contribute, and there are so many millions of people who should have survived instead of me.

But I did survive, and I feel it is my obligation to repay in some way. And the only way I finally came to the realization was that I must speak out. I must bear witness.

And since 1985, I have been speaking to whoever would listen, to whoever would invite me. I speak. I tell of my own personal story. And I also feel that by doing that, I do not allow the world to forget. And all the millions-- 6 million Jews and 5 million other people perished during the Holocaust. And I feel that I am their spokesperson, and I must do so until I cannot stand up any longer. This is my mandate, and I must do that. And this is what I'm doing.

You were saying in the haystack you are the only survivor. Could you see the faces of the people who were trying to murder you? Were they found later for possible prosecutions [INAUDIBLE] against you?

No, I could not see anything or anybody when I was hiding in the haystack. First of all, people are very interested in these haystacks. Here, our haystacks are very small. But in that area of Poland, which is now the Ukraine, the haystacks were as big as long barns. As a matter of fact, they were built like barns. And that they were huge.

And when I crawled in inside, my main objective and my main aim was not to cough, not to sneeze, and to be able to breathe, because the hay is filled with dust. And this is what I concentrated on.

I did not see any faces. And when I finally did make my way out, it was dark. It was at night. And there was no one left.

Yes.

What happened to you again when you were [INAUDIBLE]? What happened [INAUDIBLE]?

Well, the way that it happened, I owe a great debt of gratitude to the Soviet soldiers. And I [AUDIO OUT]

--strongly enough what they did. I was in my own filth. I was full of bugs and filth. They cleaned me up and they



reverted me to a human being.

After the hospital, and after I was nursed back to health there by people in Luck-- L-U-C-K-- and that's not to be confused with the city of Ludz-- L-U-D-Z-- I met the other survivor, who was older than I. As a matter of fact, at one point she was a student of my father's.

But we met in the city of Luck, and decided to go back to my hometown, which was not very far from there, to find out, hopefully, some of our family and friends survived.

We did go back, and our reception in my hometown was very, very cold. The people, our former friends and former neighbors, kept going around, and just saying, if only we knew, we would have helped. Well, they knew but they did not help. They didn't extend a helping hand.

The reception was very cool. And we felt we could not stay there. And there was no one else around who survived.

We were told that at that point, most of the survivors were gathering in Germany. You see, in Germany there were the four powers-- American, Great Britain, France, and Russian. And there we would be safer than in Poland.

As a matter of fact, I like to bring out the fact that in Poland, even after the war, there were many pogroms. And these pogroms were as a result of the local population being very greedy, and not wanting to return the possessions and homes to the Jewish survivors.

One of the more infamous pogroms took place in Kielce-- K-I-E-L-C-E. In this town, there gathered 42 survivors in 1946, a year after the war was over. And on a date that is very dear to us, the 4th of July, 1946, the local population got together at night and murdered the 42 Jewish survivors. And that is just one example of what was going on in Poland.

So we gathered in Germany. Our journey to Germany was very eventful because everything had to be done illegally. We couldn't buy a ticket and go on a train and travel.

And so in my case, we went from Luck to Krakow, which is the southern part of Poland. Then we ended up in Bratislava-- at that time, Czechoslovakia. And from there we made our way to Vienna, and finally ended up in Munich.

When we arrived in Munich, there was a whole group of us. And we did all this illegally.

When we came to Munich, in the area around there, we were under the jurisdiction of the Americans. At that time, we were put in what they called DP camps-- Displaced Persons camps.

Now these camps were organized by the United Nations Relief-- Rest and-- Relief and Rehabilitation Agency. At first, everyone who found himself or herself in that area was put in the same DP camp. But that didn't work out very well, because there were survivors like myself, and then there were people who were running from their countries and from that area, their area, because they collaborated with the Germans, and they were afraid of punishment.

In the early DP camps, there were many confrontations, very unhealthy confrontations, between survivors and the collaborators with the Germans. I did not find anyone that I knew, but some of my friends in the DP camps found perpetrators, and they did not appreciate staying with them under the same roof. So, consequently, we were separated. And the Jewish survivors were put in separate DP camps.

I ended up in several DP camps. My first one was Foehrenwald. Foehrenwald is near Munich, and it was a large DP camp. We ended up there.

Life in the DP camps was-- it wasn't luxurious, but at least we didn't have to worry about our life. Food was still very sparse. We had to stand in line for the three meals a day. We did get a bunk bed, a piece of a towel, and, for the first time in five years, a cake of soap, a toothbrush and toothpaste. And to us these were luxurious items.

I remember going in, to begin with, into our first DP camp. That was Zeilsheim, I think, in Austria.

The first thing they did, they had to disinfect us. And that was a very unpleasant experience. They put a hose and hosed us down with a white, chalky matter that I can still taste and smell today. And it penetrated every pore of your skin, and stayed with you forever, it seems like. But it was for our own good.

And there are many unpleasant memories. But in a way, we were saved, and our life was our own.

I remembered my grandmother's address in the United States. And don't ask me what I ate this morning, but the address of my grandmother was 231 Echo Place, Bronx, 57, New York. And I wrote to my grandmother, telling her that I was the sole survivor of the family, and I would love to join her.

Well, at that point, I understand that my grandmother was no longer alive. I'm told she died of a broken heart, because her only son, my father, never made it, never joined the family in the United States.

I did receive from the rest of my family an affidavit which assured-- it was an affidavit that said that I would not become a burden to the government, and that my family will take care of me. And so I was very happy at that time, and thought I would be able to join my family right away in the United States.

But that was not to be. I had to wait three long years in different DP camps before I was allowed to join my family in the United States.

I don't know if that answered your question, but--

Yes.

Can you talk about your family now, and introduce anyone who may be the audience, you know?

Well, actually, I mean, it's my family because it's my adopted family. There are quite a few representatives, and I'm very, very delighted and very grateful that they're here.

There's, in the second row, there's Mr. Joe Kleier. Then there is his daughter-- stand up. Yeah. Dale Latiff. Her husband is one of the proud American soldiers. He's a general in the United States Air Force. And they're stationed now here in Washington.

Then there is-- gosh, I can't even-- stand up. You. That's right.

Lorraine Schooner, a dear, dear friend. Then there is Bea Kleier. Welcome.

Then there is Mama. And she doesn't have a name, but she's my adopted mama. She is Mama, and she is the mother of Lorraine. And I consider her my adopted mama too.

Then there is, I guess, Dave Citrin, who is a dear friend, and who works here at the museum. And stand up. There he is. That's right. And there is Harry Markowicz, is a fellow survivor who came. We belong to the group Child Survivors together.

And Harry Markowicz teaches. He's a professor at Gallaudet. And I hope to speak there in the near future.

And then there is, on the next row-- that's right. [APPLAUSE] And then there is Murray Schooner, husband of Lorraine, and son-in-law of wonderful Mama. That's Murray Schooner.

And here I have also Elizabeth Strassburger, a friend and survivor from here. And then there is the young man who asked me to mention all this-- stand up, John. John Minek who is the director of the Speaker's Bureau. And he holds our hand and does all our wonderful things. I mean, we do all these things because of him.

And then there is another fellow here, Louis Smith, who is also a volunteer. And my husband, who is my chauffeur. Stand up.

[LAUGHTER AND APPLAUSE]

Thank you.

All right. Thank you all for coming. If you stay a little bit longer just in case folks have questions. Charlene will stay here a little bit longer if you have any questions. And we thank you all.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you for being such wonderful audience. I appreciate your giving me your time. Thank you very much for coming.

Thanks for [BACKGROUND CHATTER]

We had so many--