

And he gave me some medication-- not too much. But it didn't help too much. Later on, when they feed me a little bit better, I-- the wounds disappear. And I was much better off. But I saw him only once.

What were his experiences? What happened to him? How did--

My father, he work for on-- the German took the Jewish doctors to the villagers to treat people from typhoid fever. And when-- and then they used to kill them. So when my-- my father was in one of those villages. When somebody said that Gestapo came to the town, to the village, he escape. And he hide in the little Ukrainian Orthodox Church. And he-- the priest saw him, and he hide him in the church. So he was hidden in this church for another seven months, in the basement of the church, by the priest.

And apparently, it was another doctor, a woman doctor, was hidden in the same basement. So he survived the war.

What happened to your mother?

My mother was taken away. And actually she tried to survive. And she-- my parents have friend in Lvov. She was an architect. And my mother was very friendly with his sister. And his sister was taken to Russia by Russians. So he's-- he contacted my father and said that her sister was pretty dark, and that she could-- she will-- when she can reach Lvov, he can hide her, because he has his sister papers.

She took the train to Lvov, and somebody recognized her on the train-- means thought she's a Jew. And she was taken off the train. And she just disappear. My father thought she was-- got a letter once from Drohobycz or from somewhere-- I don't remember exactly-- that she's in the prison and if she pays certain sum of money, she can be safe. But she send-- he sent the money, but meantime, she was taken to Auschwitz, and she was killed in Auschwitz.

Tell us a little bit about being in the orphanage in Łasko, when the Germans used to come and do some searches, either for the Polish underground or for Jews hiding in the orphanage.

Oh, yes, they did it quite often. At first, they wanted to take the older girls to work in Germany. They needed workers in Germany. And they also search for Jewish children, and they search for people which were hiding in orphanages. It was Polish underground most of the time.

It was in Łomna. So they used to bring the Polish woman, which was expert in recognizing Jews, with him, then. And she could speak Polish, so she talked to children, and she was searching for accent maybe. And she look in our eyes, if we are not, we don't have Jewish eyes, if we are Poles, or we are Jews.

And she-- so quite often, once only, I was working. I was peeling potatoes in the kitchen. We worked very hard in orphanage. And she just look at me, and she said, because I have a long braids, and she said, oh, the beautiful hair. This student has such a beautiful-- child has such a beautiful hairs. And I was keeping my eyes down. I even look at her, because I was told that I have Jewish eyes, so I cannot look at her. And somehow I survive.

But most of the time I was hidden. Sister Sophia, she knew who I am, used to take me with other, older children, older girls, and we used to hide underneath the--

Stage.

--stage in the--

Auditorium.

--auditorium. And it was special place. We used to crawl in the stage. And the mat was thrown out, so nobody could see us and see that house.

But really, it never happened they look underneath the stage. It happened a few times that they look for children. It was quite often.

And I remember only once, I was working on the time, cleaning the rooms, when in the corridor, the woman-- it was probably Jewish mother. She asked Sister Superior to hide her child. And she was screaming and crying. And I don't know if the child was taken.

But Sister Superior told her, I cannot do that. Absolutely, I cannot do it. And this poor woman was crying and begging, could you please hide my child? Because they are going to kill us. Maybe, you can hide our child. I don't know if she did it or not. I don't know.

Don't have enough time to talk about your feelings or lack of such during these years. So let's just talk about events. So in beginning of 1945, you were so-called liberated. You are with the orphanage near Warsaw. The Russians liberated you. Then what happens?

Then we went back to Warsaw, because everybody left something in the basement of the house that we were taken away. So we were looking for the house so nuns could recover the goods, because everything was important.

But apparently, house was-- we couldn't recognize the street. So the Russian gave us the building, the place to live, in a little town near Warsaw. And we settled there. It was the empty building, which was occupied by German once.

And then my father came looking for me. It was May 1945. And apparently, he knew that I am-- the nuns are taking care of me. So they sent him to several places. And he came, and he just took me away.

It was exactly day of my father's birthday. It was 9th of May, at the end of the Second World War, the signing of the--

Capitulation.

--capitulation.

So, did you go back to Łąsko, to your hometown, where you had a beautiful house?

Well, my father took me there because he didn't know what to do with me. And he had, in Łąsko, he had a friend. It was the Catholic priest, who was very good friend of my father. He was the parish. I don't know how you say that.

Priest.

Priest in parish. And so I stay with them, with him, for, like, two or three month. And later on, when my-- apparently, my grandmother survived too. She was hidden by my father patient, old woman which my father used to treat once. And she decided to save my grandmother.

And he-- And one of my cousins survived. She was hidden by my grandmother maid. So we three of us-- four of us, actually-- settle in Nowy Sacz. And later on, we moved to eastern part to the German part of Poland.

Western Poland.

Western Poland, occupied by the German once, because German were thrown away to Germany, and there were plenty of empty houses. And we could settle in Hirschberg, in Jelenia Góra, and later on in Wrocław, Breslau.

And I went to school. And that's it.

Well, just for your information, Lidia Kleinman then became an engineer. In 19 they got married, married her school friend, Mr. Leszek Siczarz. They both immigrated to Israel--

Israel, yes.

--in 1957. They have two children. Both are physicians now.

And I am mentioning your profession because there is a connection between your profession as a building engineer and your experiences during the war. And if you could tell us in a few sentences about what happened two and a half years ago.

Ah, well, I used to work in World Trade Center. And see, later, my office moved away. But I still have connection with Port Authority in World Trade Center. So I, exactly on the same day, I had a meeting, and I wanted to go to Tower One in Port Authority. And I forgot my papers. So I had to run back to the office. And when I was in subway, the event happen.

So we went out, and I look at those. My feeling were terrible. The first-- I knew how many people work in World Trade Center, and I used to work it for 14 years or 15 years. I work in Tower One on 17 Floor, World Trade Center.

And when I saw those burning buildings, and smoke, and towers-- I was so close-- I suddenly felt like I am during the war leaving Warsaw. And seeing those burning buildings, both sides of my-- and I just couldn't leave. They were chasing us away, and I felt like I need to see, and I need to be with people in World Trade Center, because I was sure everybody died. When you look at those burning buildings, you just couldn't believe that anyone survive.

And I knew people in Port Authority on 83rd floor which die. And I remember the wonderful Rodin collection on 101st floor, in-- in Kaufman-- the Kaufman collection. And I just couldn't believe that it happen. It happen again. Somebody could be such a murderer, and see.

Questions? Yes.

Was your father still alive?

My father survived the war. Now he is dead. He die in 1974. But he survived the war, and he was practicing medicine after the war. He left Poland for Israel. He was practicing medicine in Israel. He die, yes.

And my grandmother die when she was 99. She die in Israel.

Yes.

After the war, did you keep in any contact with the Catholic sisters who helped you?

Shall I repeat the question?

Yes, I can-- OK. Yes, I went once back. And somehow, I don't know, I feel embarrassed. Because later on, I, for many years, when I was in school in Poland, there was university, I just didn't go back. I felt that I am betraying them, that I'm not Catholic anymore, because I was baptized, and I was raised in Catholic religion. And I just didn't want to go back.

And I was just going my way, happy. And I never thought about war. And I was typical teenager.

Later on, I went back to Poland, and I visited nuns. And they were-- and I stay in contact, especially with Mother Superior, which knew who I am. And the second nun knew who I am die in the meantime.

But I do have contact with some of the girls that I survived, especially with one. She's Jewish. She's a writer. She lives in London. And she came to us in Warsaw.

Yes, go ahead.

How do you think those events changed you as a child, and how do you see young people today compared to how you were?

Well, I think that I am stronger. I am very strong person. And I take-- young people today, they are lucky they don't have the experience like me. I cannot compare, for instance, my children with myself.

I think I am much stronger person, that I am able to lose everything today, and I am going to be happy anyway. I don't have any-- nothing is important for me except life and being a decent person.

I don't really care very much for money. It's important, but I am not willing to do anything to have it. I can live on small things, and I can have a lot. And I understand better, things better.

I am not prejudiced at all. I like everybody.

Christina.

You said you felt guilty towards the nuns, that you, when you went back to your, like, your family and everything. Was it, like, confusing, hard for you to give up Catholicism? I mean since you lived with that for a couple of years, and then you went back?

Yeah, it was. But in addition, I knew that I cannot betray my nation, even if I was not raise in the real Jewish religion.

Actually, I learn about the Jewish-- Judaism in Israel. Would you believe that? Because as a child, I was never exposed to that. My parents were kind of agnostic. I knew I am Jewish. Definitely, I was. But religion was something totally strange to me.

And but Catholicism, it was something which was drilling to me for four years. And I knew that being Catholic, I betrayed my people. And another one, I know they expected me to be Catholic, because I'm being saved by being Catholic. That what they did.

So maybe I am wrong. Maybe. But that how I felt. And I just see typical way I try to escape. So I decided not to keep contact and not to make my life difficult. I felt very guilty about that. I felt embarrassed. I felt ashamed.

Diane.

Lidia, can you talk a little bit about the suitcase, the container that your mother sent with you to the hospital, and what was in that, what happened with that?

Oh, yes. I had it. After war, my father open it, and he found the pictures. I don't know why my mother took pictures. Some money-- dollars, his diploma, my birth certificate, my parents' marriage certificate-- everything which could betray me completely. Somebody will open it, and it was it.

And even insurance policy, Italian insurance policy, life insurance policy, or something like that. Everything was what has a value was in this suitcase.

I couldn't open it. It was very hard. It had very hardy lock. My father pried away. I didn't have a key.

And I took everything-- papers, pictures-- and I just discard the suitcase. It was a nuisance for me, so I don't have that. But I donated all the pictures to a museum, and everything which was in this suitcase which survived.

I would like to encourage all of you who haven't visited our exhibition, Life in Shadows, about children who

survived in the Holocaust, the first photograph that you see as you enter, there is a photograph of children in the convent with nuns. And there is one face that is scratched out. The one that is scratched out is actually Lidia. So why don't you tell us the story about this picture?

Oh, well, it was-- the young man hiding, probably Polish man. He was probably underground, in Polish underground, and he was hiding in the monastery in this orphanage. And he was a photographer, so he used to take pictures. Everybody-- children and individual pictures.

And one day, nun called me. Sister Sophia called me. And he said, don't you take your pictures, because you look very much Jewish. So don't take pictures.

So she took away pictures that I had. And one which survive, I scratch my face, because I thought, oh, somebody's going to see this picture. And that is [POLISH].

And on this picture, it is the picture-- it is also a girl which was absolutely Jewish, and she was really Jewish. Her name was Ursula, Ursula Piper, or Feiffer. I don't remember exactly. And she was the daughter of the very prominent judge, Jewish judge, in Poland. And she was hidden.

What happened to her, I don't know, because suddenly she disappear. So probably they hide her because she was-- her face was really, it is like really, really Semitic face. But I scratch my face. I don't want anybody to recognize me.

Go ahead. Yes, sir.

Do you believe or feel that something like the Holocaust could happen again, either in Europe or elsewhere? Or is that--

No, yes, I do believe that. I do believe that.

I was going back to Poland 11 years ago, just after solidarity. And myself. And we're driving from Germany. It was rented car.

And it was a problem with the gas in Europe on that time. So they were a long line in Poland to get gas at the pump station. And we step up the one pump station, and unleaded gas, yes, was available. But they were long lines.

And so I left the car. And I speak Polish fluently, no problem. No accent. I really speak fluently. So I went to attendant, and I said, can I bring my car to the pump with unleaded gas so I don't have to wait in the line.

And he says to me, all the Jews are coming here, and they are taking everything what we have. They are buying everything. Nothing is left. We don't have gas because Jews are coming here and filling car with the gas.

So I said to him, you should be happy, because in United States, when they are coming to buy stuff, we produce more, and we are selling. Everybody's getting rich. So why do you complain? That's my--

But, yes, I do believe it is some kind of return of an antisemitist. And it's ugly. I don't know if it can happen, what happened, because it was during the Second World War. But I do believe that we are not really welcome.

And because what happened in Israel, and the sympathy for Palestinian, which I have too, because for those children, poor children, and what they are doing. The way politics goes, I do believe that it might happen. It might happen again.

Go ahead, sir.

You had mentioned the Polish woman who came in to you when you were peeling the potatoes wanting to

try to find out if you were Jewish. I assume that she was a collaborator? And--

Yes, she was a collaborator. She was.

Were there other-- are you aware, were there other Polish citizens, non-Jews, who did that, and do you remember anyone that she identified and they took away?

No. No. I really got-- I live because of the decent Polish people. I am alive because they helped to hide me. They helped to my father. They helped my-- this poor woman hide my grandmother. She didn't have to do that.

My mother didn't have money. The only thing that she gave her, she took care of her two grandchildren when she used to go and work.

I know a lot of people what were hidden by Poles. My cousin was hidden by my grandmother maid. The poor woman, she hardly could read and write. She stay in my grandparents' house, which was occupied by German Gestapo, with two kids. At this Gestapo family, they were two kids in-- two German kids. She was very good maid. She was excellent cook.

And this woman hide my cousin in her room in the attic. During the day, she was-- she couldn't walk, so she was put into the bed, and always she could cover her head if somebody came in. So bed was, like, made up.

And in evening, when she came to her room, then she could eat, and would walk a little bit. And that how she survive.

When we found her after the war, she couldn't walk. She didn't have muscles. She had to go through physical therapy. And till today, she walks fine.

By the way, she's a doctor. She graduated medical school in Poland. She stay in Poland. She lives in Poland.

Are there any other questions? Yes.

At what stage did you learn about your mother's death? Was that when you were in the orphanage, or at the end of the war?

Yes, I was in the orphanage. The Mother Superior came and took me to her room. And she told me that my mother die, that my mother was caught. On that time, she was in touch with my father, probably.

I have one more question. After the war, when you lived with your father, when you were a teenager