

Wednesday, April 3, 2013

1:00-2:00 p.m.

**UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM**  
***FIRST PERSON: REGINA SPIEGEL***

Held at:  
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum  
100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, SW  
Washington, DC

(Remote CART)

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>> Bill Benson: Good afternoon, and welcome to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. My name is Bill Benson, I am the host of the museum's public program, *First Person*. Thank you for joining us. We are in our 14th year of the *First Person* program. Our *First Person* today is Mrs. Regina Spiegel whom we shall meet shortly.

This 2013 season of *First Person* is made possible through the generosity of the Louis Franklin Smith Foundation to whom we are grateful for again sponsoring *First Person*.

*First Person* is a series of conversations with survivors of the Holocaust who share with us their firsthand accounts of their experience during the Holocaust. Each guest serves as a volunteer here at this museum. Our program continues through mid August. The museum's website at [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org) provides information about each of our upcoming *First Person* guests.

Regina Spiegel will share with us her *First Person* account as a survivor for about 45 minutes. If time allows towards the end of the program, we'll have an opportunity for you to ask her a few questions.

The life stories of Holocaust survivors transcend the decades. What you are about to hear from Regina is one individual's account of the Holocaust. We have prepared a brief slide presentation to help with her introduction.

Regina Spiegel was born May 12, 1926 in Radom, Poland. Her father worked as a leather cutter for a large shoe manufacturer and her mother took care of their six

children. On this map of Europe, the arrow points to Poland. On this map of Poland, the arrow points to Radom. On September 1, 1939, German troops invaded Poland and Regina's town was attacked. Like all Jews in Radom, Regina's family was ordered into a newly created ghetto. Regina's parents smuggled her out by bribing one of the guards. She escaped to Pionki where her older sister Rozia lived. Soon she was conscripted into forced labor and forged a close relationship with Sam Spiegel, a fellow inmate.

This photograph is of Regina's sister Hanka, who was taken from the ghetto and sent to Treblinka where she was killed.

We close with a photograph of Regina and Sam on their wedding day in the Foehrenwald displaced persons camp in Bavaria. Upon arriving in Washington, DC in late 1947, Sam found work as a sheet metal worker and over time built a successful business in the construction industry. Regina and Sam have continued to live in the Washington, DC area since 1947. They have three daughters and nine grandchildren, with the youngest being 11 years old. Their first great grandchild was born in 2011. Regina has spoken many times about her experience during the Holocaust to a wide variety of groups, including at numerous schools, such as my daughter's former high school.

Regina's volunteer work for the museum includes working at the donor's desk, where you will find her Wednesdays, with the exception of today.

Sam was an active volunteer at the museum, but his recent illness has prevented

him from continuing. He spent a lot of time working on the "Remember the Child Who Perished" programs, which calls upon young Jews as part of their bar and bat mitzvahs to honor children who died during the Holocaust. Sam searched for the names of children who perished, the name of the town from which they came and where and when they perished. Until recently, Regina and Sam had participated every other year in the March of the Living, which took them to Auschwitz and Birkenau and other major camps, as well as to Israel in most years. They went on 10 Marches of the Living.

With that, I'd like to ask you to join me in welcoming our *First Person*, Mrs. Regina Spiegel.

[Applause]

Regina, thank you so much for your willingness to join us and be our *First Person* today. We have a really great audience, and we have a great deal to cover in a very short period, so we'll just get started right away.

Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. Regina, you were 13 years of age living with your family in Radom, Poland. First, let's begin with you telling us about your family, your community and yourself in the years before the war, then what happened when Germany attacked Poland.

>> Regina Spiegel: Thank you. I welcome you too, to this group. What I want to tell you, that the minute the Germans came into our town, our life changed completely. Because before the war, we lived like regular citizens, we had a nice

life. My father took care of the family. We always had enough to eat. We lived nicely. But once the Germans walked in, our life completely changed, as if it never existed before.

As a matter of fact, if you think about the 13th of September, it reminds you probably of going back to school. So was it for us. All the young children were supposed to go back to school. But you know what -- it never happened, because the first order of their business was Jewish children were not allowed to go to school. You can't imagine. It's fine once in a while, when you don't feel like going that day to school, and it's all right with your parents' permission. However, when somebody comes around and tells you you're not allowed to go because you happen be born Jewish, that puts a completely different thing on everything you're doing, because you know that you are in a lot of trouble.

Like my older sisters formed groups in the cellars in order to teach the kids, because they were kids. This was their first year going to school. But they were afraid. They can't be serious. So they want in order not to miss anything, they told them, so they should be able to keep up with the learning. However, they needn't have bothered, because children as a whole were their first victims.

I don't know why they were so afraid of kids. Kids cannot do anything. But that's what they did.

>> Bill Benson: Regina, you told me that your father lost his job almost overnight. Tell us how you were able to -- how he was able to provide food for you, how you were able to make ends meet once he lost his work.

>> Regina Spiegel: It was very hard, because first of all the banks closed up right away, so even if you had a little bit of money in the banks you could not access, you had no access to them.

Of course, but it was rather hard, but we were able to barter with the neighbors. You know, like my mother, usually in Europe, to this day I think, everything that you had, anything like this or this -- I messed up. OK.

[Laughter]

OK. Anything like this I'm wearing was probably made of gold or silver, so you were able to barter with our neighbors to get us some food. But it was terrible. From the minute they walked in, we knew we were in trouble.

>> Bill Benson: Regina, it would not be too long before you and your family were forced to go into a ghetto. Tell us what the ghetto was like, what the conditions were like for you and your family going there.

>> Regina Spiegel: Do I have to?

>> Bill Benson: Just a little.

>> Regina Spiegel: Well, you know, one day they decided to -- because they saw that somehow we're managing, you know, like I said bartering with our neighbors, you managed. But putting us into the ghettos was really so terrible because you

take -- we were a fairly large family. We were eight of us. They put in another family with us, so as a result when they came in the evening -- and we only got like one room for everybody. So when they came in the evening to put your head down, to go to sleep, it wasn't enough room for everybody.

So right away, it was so horrible that I can't even describe it. Because, you know, I was still at that time a kid, and I was even then happy, because as long as I was with my family it was OK for me, because I figured my family is going to take care of me.

This soon changed, because my mother approached me and she said "Regina, you have to leave the ghetto." I said "Why?"

She wouldn't -- you know, parents in those years didn't sit down, like my kids do with their children, explain everything exactly why we have to do that. She said "You're doing it, and there is no questioning." And I said -- I had a sister who was two years older than I was, and I figured why do you pick on me just because I'm the youngest one? But no, she somehow -- I don't know what she saw in me that I never realized that she figured that maybe I have the best chance

Actually, when I couldn't do anything, I was so angry with her that when I left I just took off my armband, because in those years you had to wear an armband that showed that you were Jewish. So I took off my armband and just left. I never said goodbye to my parents.

You know what? To a certain degree, this kept me alive all that time, because I

said I have to live to see my parents, because I felt so guilty, because I figured later on that she probably didn't -- that she did it because it was better for me. So I left.

I got to my sister's, who lived in a little town, it was called Pionki.

>> Bill Benson: Regina, I'm going to stop you for just a moment. Tell us, you walked out of the ghetto, which was not easy to do. Tell us how you got to Pionki.

>> Regina Spiegel: I walked out, I didn't have a penny to my name. And just what I wore. I just walked out, and I got to a train. In those years, I don't know, it was still warm, it was in Poland that during like vacation time, that you can travel with an adult and you don't have to pay, a kid doesn't have to pay.

So when I came on that train, and I looked around, and I saw a lady sitting in the side, so I sat down over there and I started talking to her. So when the guard came in to check for the tickets, he didn't even look at me, because he assumed, I think, that I was with her, and because I started talking to her. He just let me go.

So when I came to Pionki, I got off, and my sister actually met me there, and she took me, because she lived in that little town, she was married, and she lived there. She actually had a little boy. He was at the time 18 months old. And she had also -- it was terrible, because she had this baby and she knew she couldn't bring him in, in the camp, so she found a Polish woman who took care of the baby. But after a while she, the woman, took the baby to the gestapo and told them where my sister was.



As a matter of fact, after the war, I went to see her, asking her "Why did you have to tell them where my sister was?"

At least, this way maybe she would have had a chance.

And she told me she could have never done this, because my sister would have never forgiven her for that. But it didn't change anything, because when they brought my sister there, and they actually wanted her to tell that this is not her baby.

Because, you see, my sister was working there as a dentist, and they figured that if they lose her where are they going to replace her now? They weren't always available. So they wanted her to say "This is not my child," but of course, she could never do that. And she and the baby were killed when she tried to grab the baby, when she saw how they're stuffing everybody into the cattle trains. She figured maybe she as an adult, because I was a lot of times on these cattle trains, maybe she as an adult might survive. But the baby would never make it.

So she actually grabbed the baby, she tried to run away, and she and the baby were shot. And that's how I lost, that I knew the first time, my sister.

>> Bill Benson: Once your sister was denounced and you lost her, you were in Pionki, tell us about Pionki and what your life was like there.

>> Regina Spiegel: Pionki was a very important town. You know, I never realized it held one of the largest powder munition factories in Poland, and therefore it became a great factor, actually, in my survival and the survival of many, many

others, because the Germans made the slave labor camp. It was one of these camps that men and women actually worked together. Not many camps that had like this. Most of them they were separated. But in this particular camp men and women worked together.

As a matter of fact, in that place I met my husband, because he was from another town, and he approached me saying to me, "I know you." I asked him, "Are you from my town, like from Radom?"

He said "No." I said "Where are you from?"

He said "A town in Poland" which I heard of it, Kozenice. I said "I was never in Kozenice."

I told him he's just maybe saying something. But then he said I remember you, because you worked someplace with somebody. I told him, I said, "So tell me what did I wear?"

And he went to describe my clothes better -- if they would have asked me "Regina, describe your coat" I would have never been able to do it. And he described it with everything, with even my patch, that I had the patch in the sleeve.

>> Bill Benson: Even though this was a camp that allowed both men and women as slave laborers, how did the two of you have the opportunity to talk with each other?

>> Regina Spiegel: You see, in a certain time they gave us -- you know, after many camps I realized this was probably not one of the worst, worst camps, because we happened to have somebody who took care of us, who happened to be, even though he was a German, lieutenant in the army, he still was like he's human. Because we had a lot of people that were watching us, and they weren't always very nice to us.

So he came out with an order, if they come back you can search them, you know, when they come back from work, but during the time that they are in their surroundings, in their camp, you are not to enter there.

There was a lot of talking about some people, some of the people that were guarding the camp. Don't forget, we were young, young girls, not so bad looking, so sometimes, you know, they wanted to do something to us.

He actually stopped them. As a matter of fact, also after the war we found out about him, that he, when they took us, and this was -- can I go on?

>> Bill Benson: Mm-hmm.

>> Regina Spiegel: When I was there and they were trying to send us out already, after working there, they decided to send us to Auschwitz, you know, as I'm talking to you time moves, you know, it moves very quickly, and this was already like I came into that camp in 1942, and we were moved from there in the beginning of 1944. Because, apparently, the Russians were coming in and from another site, and the Germans were beginning to feel a little bit of war, something

of the war.

What I started saying about this guy, that he actually went with us. We never knew that we are being taken to Auschwitz. But he was the one that knew, and he supposedly went to Auschwitz ahead of time to tell them, when it's coming, a big transport from Pionki, don't kill them, they're very good workers, and if you kill them we don't -- we need them for the production. Therefore, we kind of thought that to a certain degree he helped us survive, because it was actually true, when we came to Auschwitz they didn't take us. Because, if you came to Auschwitz in those years, they would just take you and send you to the ovens. During most of the time.

With our transport they did, they took some people that weren't well or older people, but the young ones they let us go by. So we managed to get like this to the other place, to Auschwitz.

>> Bill Benson: Regina, when you were sent to Auschwitz was Sam still with you?

>> Regina Spiegel: Yes. As a matter of fact, we traveled, my husband and I, he wasn't yet my husband, I want you to know, but after all it's 60-some years and I am so used to referring to him as my husband, I can't say he is as my friend. But he was actually my boyfriend at the time. As a matter of fact, when we came into Auschwitz and they were doing the selection, and he smuggled himself to the -- if they caught him, he would have been probably like gone, but when we came into

Auschwitz he came running to me. He said -- because he was four years older than I was. So I think he had much more perception of what this camp looked like and what it is. He said to me, "Regina, if we ever get out of here," which nobody ever thought, that once you get to Auschwitz you get out, "Meet me in my hometown."

I turned around very quickly, "Why not my town? Why yours?"

[Laughter]

You know, when you think back, I know now it's funny, but when you think back you say to yourself, why did I do that? Why? What got into me to just say this? It didn't make any sense, because I have no way to know where I'm going to wind up or what it was. That's what I told him.

For years he couldn't forget it. He said "She's still the same Regina."

[Laughter]

>> Bill Benson: Regina, when the decision was made there that you were selected for labor, what happened next? What were you forced to do at that point?

>> Regina Spiegel: At that point, we in Auschwitz, it wasn't yet any work, because as I say they just brought you to like another station, because I didn't stay in Auschwitz more than six weeks. But I'll tell you, to be there six weeks is like being someplace a century, because it was unbelievable.

Men and women were right away separated. That's why I was so wondering that

my husband -- that my boyfriend managed to get over to me. And they put a name on you. Till then I was known as Regina, Rejina in Polish. They gave me a name, 4641. This became your name. I will tell you from the minute, from zero, you had to know that name, that number, because if not they could kill you.

As a matter of fact, we had to strip naked, and I want to tell you I was already 16 years old there, and I never, I never stood in front, especially of a man, naked.

Even I don't think my father ever saw me naked. And they did that to us.

This is the most horrible thing from Auschwitz that I fear, because it took away, like, our -- you know, like --

>> Bill Benson: Dignity.

>> Regina Spiegel: Exactly. You know, like dignity. It made you feel so, so horrible. That I had some pictures of my little nephew and of my family, because we always, whenever we ran we had to run with our pictures, because we wanted to always have them next to us.

So I held on to this, and this SS man came over to me saying in German "What is that?"

I really didn't -- I said "Nothing" because I figured what are my pictures going to do to him? You know? I like to use my hands too much.

[Laughter]

What happened, he took it away, he said "You put it down right here" took all my pictures away. Nothing. Like left without anything.

We also realized this is a place you better have somebody next to you. So whoever was standing near me that was getting these numbers became your buddy. We watched out for one another. When they called my number, and I once was standing around, looking around, she actually hit me and saying "Regina, I think they mean you." She already remembered my number, but I didn't even look at it. I was so -- I was like in another world, like nothing is real. Because I was in the camp, and this was not like a camp. The whole place was surrounded by electric barbed wire, double. If you, God forbid, managed to get through one, you had another one.

Actually, you know what? They were very nice to us. They always encouraged you to touch the electric barbed wires. But we said to ourselves, "You want us dead? We'll show you that if we can, we will stay alive." And that was our, you know, like almost, like you say, the thing to do, because I always felt that nobody probably knows what's going on here.

We have to be sometimes here to tell people what was happening, because we figured if people knew, somebody would have come and say "Hey, what are you doing with these people?"

But there was no outcry from nobody. We had no help, in a way. We were like abandoned people.

Finally, I got out there, yes.

>> Bill Benson: You got out after six weeks.

>> Regina Spiegel: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: Then you would end up going to other camps. Tell us where you were sent from there.

>> Regina Spiegel: From there, one was Baumlitz, where they used to make -- most of the places that I was was always something to do with the war, you know, either stuff to shoot, and actually from Baumlitz we used to work on -- they told us we have to clean very clean, working on Panzerfaust, because if you leave anything it can fire back. They used them in the -- they carried them with them. We occasionally managed, I hope, but we didn't do such a great job. So maybe something fired back. But I don't know how many.

>> Bill Benson: They told you, though, if any misfired they would consider it an act of sabotage, right?

>> Regina Spiegel: Absolutely. Anything, to them anything was an act of sabotage. If you smiled the wrong way, you know, that was an act of sabotage. You know, like when this guy took away my pictures, you know, he was so near me, if I probably would have had a gun I probably would have used it on him. But who had a gun? Who knew -- I wouldn't even know which side, with all of the ammunition I didn't know which side would shoot first.

>> Bill Benson: Am I right, Regina, that the place where you worked on the Panzerfaust, which I think was for anti-tank weapons --

>> Regina Spiegel: Something like this.



>> Bill Benson: -- it was actually underground, wasn't it?

>> Regina Spiegel: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: Underground factory?

>> Regina Spiegel: Yes, yes.

>> Bill Benson: What was on top?

>> Regina Spiegel: It was like a garden. If you went out on top, this was so they wouldn't be bombed, because if you went out on the top, whoever got out, it looked like a park. It was a park.

>> Bill Benson: You were underground in the factory there?

>> Regina Spiegel: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: You were in simple camps, but eventually you would end up at Bergen-Belsen.

>> Regina Spiegel: Yes. Maybe --

>> Bill Benson: You're OK. You're good.

>> Regina Spiegel: I want to tell you, if this past week we had a big holiday, you know, it was like Passover for us. I happened to be at my daughter's seder, and some people that were sitting there said to me "Regina, why don't you tell us a little bit?"

Because the seder teaches us to remember, to remember but to remember from the old times.

I said "I remember something from the times where it's a little bit closer to it. I

happened to be in Bergen-Belsen." In this group, they had a girl that was in Bergen-Belsen. I said "Oh, my goodness, I hardly ever mention Bergen-Belsen," because that was another camp that apparently when we came in they weren't yet ready for us. No food, no water. You had to fend for yourself, and you couldn't go anyplace.

The only way you could do is like you steal somebody else's piece of bread or whatever. Honest to goodness, that's what I remember from Bergen-Belsen.

But I happened to be on a place where we were on the top, and this woman that they paired me up with was -- I knew her from someplace. I remember she has a very good voice. She used to sing. So when she saw me, the way I was crying, you know, I said "I'm so hungry. What am I going to do? I'm so hungry." She said "You know, Regina, what I found out, I don't have anything to give you," but, she said, "I found out let me teach you some songs. And if you will sing, you will find out that your hunger goes away a little bit."

You know what? It helped. I don't know how, but it did help, when I started singing with her it helped me to get this constant how I'm going to -- I promised people that I'm going to remember them. How I'm going to survive here if I can't get any bread?

You want to know something? I survived because they did take me out from even Bergen-Belsen, and I told them this at this seder, I said "With all of the food we

have, to talk about something like this, it's almost unbelievable what a different -- you know, you found yourself in a different place."

>> Bill Benson: As you said, they took you away from Bergen-Belsen. I think you went to Gleiwitz from there.

>> Regina Spiegel: No, no, Sam, my husband went to Gleiwitz.

>> Bill Benson: You went to some other camps, as the Russians got closer.

>> Regina Spiegel: Yes. Yes. As it was, you know, the war wasn't standing still, just because I had a problem to find food, but the Russians were moving very fast, and the Germans tried to -- they still had some Jews to deal with. So they tried to get rid of us. They actually were supposed to take us to Dachau, either kill us there or whatever, but on the way the bombs, we were attacked by the United States and also by other groups, you know, like the British. I didn't even know that the French were involved in it, because I wasn't there. So whatever you didn't yourself see, you didn't know that it existed. You know?

Anyhow, over there, while we were bombed, I thought that I was dead already.

But what happened, all of a sudden somebody must have climbed off me and I was able to move my hands. I said, if you move your hands you're still alive. You know?

We looked, we saw there's some woods not too far from there. So we started running towards these woods. Actually, the Germans there used to tell us, "You know, the Americans are not too far from here, and they might -- you know what

they're going to do to you, because you worked for us."

I was thinking to myself, you worked with us so many years, don't worry anymore.

I'll let the Americans take care of me, rather than you. But it didn't work out like this.

We did run into the woods.

>> Bill Benson: Regina, before you tell us about going into the woods and being liberated, when your train was bombed there's some significance to the fact that it was Hitler's birthday.

>> Regina Spiegel: Oh, yes.

>> Bill Benson: Will you tell us about that?

>> Regina Spiegel: That's why they told us, we're going to give you an extra piece of bread to celebrate Hitler's birthday. He remembers more than I do.

[Laughter]

He said "We will give you an extra piece of bread," but then when they started really bombing, they forgot about this bread or the water, that they were supposed to give us, you know, make like a party for Hitler, because they had to run too, they run away too, because had we known we didn't even have to run. But we were so afraid that we run into the woods, and we stayed there.

Then we realized we have nothing, we're going to die right here in the woods.

Then I decided to go out. You know, you have always to have one that will do the first one. So I walked out of the group, and I looked around and in the

background I see a soldier, but he didn't wear a German uniform.

So I ran over to him, I said let me find out. He said "The war is over. You go into the woods and tell everybody to come out." Apparently, they knew that there were a bunch of women there, but even though we kept on saying "Be quiet, don't talk" but you have 500 women in that place, you can't keep quiet, really.

So they knew, but they were afraid, because they thought that maybe there's some Germans there. So they forget, I don't blame them, the war is over, why get killed by the Germans? They figured these people will come out. And we actually did come out. We found out that we are freed by the Russians.

>> Bill Benson: So here you were just coming out of the woods, the Russians say you're liberated, you're free. What did that mean? What do you do?

>> Regina Spiegel: What do you do? I went into a bakery, and I said to them, "Can we have some bread?"

And he said to me, in German, I understood a little bit, he said, "Do you have money?"

I said, "What's that?"

I didn't know. I didn't have money. But then when we walked in with the Russian soldier, he told them "Give these girls some bread." Once he told them, we got some bread.

Our diet, we didn't need too much. If you had a piece of bread and a little bit of water, that was our menu. We didn't need any more, because that's what we

were -- that's why a lot of survivors that were actually liberated by the Americans, and a lot of them died because they started feeding them. With me, with the Russians, I will tell you truthfully they didn't have too much themselves. So they couldn't give you -- sometimes they would offer something, but very, very little, because you could see the way the Russians were dressed, with the shoes, like pieces of stuff wrapped around their feet to keep warm, because they didn't get any boots every month or whatever, nothing like being -- whether living in America or being liberated by Americans. There's no comparison.

>> Bill Benson: Did you decide to go to Sam's hometown or to your hometown?

>> Regina Spiegel: No, as it worked out, I became owner of a horse and buggy. So we had, instead of walking, you had to walk so much, so we would take turns, everybody at different times would change. I would walk, somebody else would move the horse, because the horse didn't have too much food, not from us. So he couldn't move too much either.

When we actually, we find out we were able to get back, and I did get back to a train, and I left my horse with the thing on the station, and I was just going to grab -- because the trains were so full, to go to my town, but all of a sudden somebody from the other side of the tracks recognized me and yelled out, "Hey, Regina! Your boyfriend is alive!"

So I said "Where is he?"

He said, "In his hometown, Kozienice." He went back. You see, he ran away

from a death march. So he was closer to Poland, and he was able to get liberated a little bit before me, I think about a month before me.

>> Bill Benson: So he made it back to Kozenice --

>> Regina Spiegel: Oh, definitely. I made it eventually, I made it to Radom too, but it was a different story. We were not -- you see, people took over our places, and they had us, they thought that we would come back and we would take everything that's ours back. But we never thought of that. Especially I know me, I never think of things like that.

I figured the people lived there, they probably think it's their home. So they could have stayed all the time, as long as I was able, I got in touch with an uncle when I got sick after the war. You know, everybody got sick after the war, because eventually it started coming, all these goodies to you, and I got very sick, and they took me to a hospital, and this doctor came in. Again, he offered me a bar of candy, and I said no. He said "What can I do for you?"

He happened to be in the CIA with the American soldiers already. And he said "What can I do for you?"

I said "The only thing you can do for me, I have an uncle" -- I have to tell you the way I pronounced it, New York, New York was Nev York for me, no New York, n-e-w reads Nev, not New. I told him I have an uncle in New York. He got in touch with him. Actually, he put an ad in the paper, and he got in touch with him, and he worked out that we were able to get together, my husband -- my boyfriend

and I, and we came to this wonderful, wonderful country. I love this country from the minute I stepped my foot into it. It's unbelievable.

>> Bill Benson: Regina, we're going to turn to our audience in a few minutes.

First, when you left the ghetto in Radom to go to Pionki to your sister Hanka, that was the last time you saw your family. When did you learn what happened to your family, and did any other family members survive?

>> Regina Spiegel: Well, I will tell you, it didn't take too long to find out what happened to our family. Most of our families were wiped out. Like in my case, my full family was taken to Treblinka, and I don't even refer to that camp as, say, as a camp. It was strictly like a slaughterhouse. They brought there trains, day in and day night, and everybody disappeared. It's unbelievable. So I never had to confront my mother.

I used to go on the March of the Living with young people, taking them on the -- which we call it March of the Living, as opposed to March of the Dead, because they usually had the death march.

I will tell you, it was what a difference. These kids learned so much, when they saw, and I took a lot of kids. I used to go back. I worked a lot, I don't know, I always had this thing from the minute, even the museum, even when the museum wasn't even open, I was already busy, and so was my husband, to help out, because we thought this is our best salvation, really, to have a place that people



can learn about this thing, what was going on, and hopefully that never anything like this would happen again.

>> Bill Benson: Regina, are you ready for a few questions from our audience?

>> Regina Spiegel: Oh, I'd love to.

>> Bill Benson: Thank you for raising your hand. We're going to have mics we're going to try to hand to you. Please use the mic. Make your question as brief as you can. I'm going to repeat it just to make sure that Regina hears it. You've got two right here, then one right up here to begin. Here comes a mic to your -- there you go, to your right.

>> Regina, thank you very much for sharing your story. Did the German officer who went ahead to Auschwitz, was he ever recognized for what he did for you? I'm thinking about some of the other --

>> Regina Spiegel: Yeah, I think he should have been. But you know what? Because he was actually -- they tried to indict him, because he was a higher rank in the German army, so he probably had maybe other things. But this I say, in that particular camp he was wonderful, and he had witnesses that came, and they talked about him, that we didn't know, because we were never private to him. He never told us "That's what I am doing." But we realized that he, to a certain degree, saved our lives, a lot of them.

>> Bill Benson: Gentleman right here? Yes?

>> Hi, Regina. I'm Calvin. I come from Los Angeles, California. Congratulations on your entire life, first of all.

>> Regina Spiegel: Thank you. Thank you.

[Applause]

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

>> Coming from Los Angeles I've seen a lot of movie stars and athletes, but this is probably the most star struck I've ever been, truthfully. I wanted to ask, during your experience moving from camp to camp and seeing everything that you did, I read that you're from a very religious family. What did that do? What type of shock waves, if any, did that send through your faith in God?

>> Regina Spiegel: Well -- yeah, I heard you, and I can answer. I will tell you, truthfully, my faith never changed. You know why? Because basically I never saw people, you know, I never saw people doing it to me. It was, I assume that they were bad people. It is otherwise, I never looked.

We couldn't have survived on our own. Because when you think back, in one of the camps, I will tell you, there was a man that actually my friend, my buddy, and I -- when they took us out from that camp, we said where are we going to find another benefactor like this? He left me a piece of apple and a piece of bread every day. I thought, when I swallowed it, I thought this is going to be the end of me. But you were so hungry, I forget, I will take a chance. You know, this guy

was not supposed to talk to us, because they were from another country, and actually they came to work there.

You see, Germany had a lot of work. So they came to work. Not like us. We were slaves.

Do you know, that that's how we survived, that we had, through the time and very silently here and there, we had some people helping us. Because, when you sit down and think, I know I was helped a lot of time. I know. And for that I was very grateful.

>> Bill Benson: All right, we have a question right here in the second row.

>> Thank you so much for making your story known. I can't understand how you were able to walk out of the ghetto.

>> Bill Benson: The question is how did you walk out of the ghetto? You were 13 years of age.

>> Regina Spiegel: I know. I know. First of all, I will tell you, my sister, the one that was in Pionki, she was a dentist. She -- you know, the farmers in Poland didn't really use that much dentists, because, let's face it, it's very expensive here, and it was expensive there too. So they didn't go to dentists.

But all of a sudden, who, during the war, really has the best? Young people, you should be able to answer this to me. The farmers, really, because they have the stuff that people need during the war. That's all you think is about food, having food for the kids, having food for your family or whatever it was. So you always

think about food.

So this guy comes into her office, and he said to her, "Rozia," called her by her first name, "Take a look with my teeth." She said "I will tell you what, it won't cost you a penny. You just help my sister get out from the ghetto." And that's when he went, because he said "How I'm going to do that?"

She said "You find a way." Because the one that guarded our ghettos, it might have been a cousin of his, or a wonderful friend. You know? So you have to know that this was, in fact, too. So that's how. Because I was never one to run. I was always, I don't know, very -- you know, I was never a fighter. I never even, as a kid, I was never a fighter. I used to love children. When I used to have five cents we used to have a neighbor's kid that liked ice cream. I would go and buy it for the five cents the ice cream.

I always loved children. I still love them.

>> Bill Benson: We're going to, I think, close out now. It's time for us to close the program. I'm going to turn back to Regina in a moment to close the program. But Regina, you can stay behind for a few minutes, if anybody would like to come ask Regina another question or just say hi to her when she steps off the stage, please do so.

>> Regina Spiegel: Someone asked me to take a picture.

>> Bill Benson: Take pictures too. It's our tradition at *First Person* that our *First Person* gets the last word. So I want to thank all of you, then turn to Regina to close our program.

>> Regina Spiegel: Well, I will tell you, what do I say? I know some of -- you know, like you talk to the choir, you know, anybody that is here doesn't need my talk, I think, because they are here for a purpose, and I hope that you learn from it, you know, that if you -- you know, like if you are angry with somebody, you can kind of think about it, think about Regina, how she was angry with her mother. Why? Because she wanted to save me. You know, that's what I mean. From my saying something, I can tell you what to do, but it's very easy to be good and not to hate. That's the worst thing. Why did they pick on us?

To this day, if you ask me, I can't figure it out.

My father was a hardworking man. We never gave anybody any troubles, and they picked us. We were such easy pickings. It was like unbelievable. But that's why we should be kind to one another, because -- you know what? I believe in kindness, because you might not love me, but be kind to me. Because somebody was kind to me, and I always, in my mind, and my children know about this, that kindness is very, very important.

If you're kind to people, they in turn are going to be kind to you. And that's the only thing I can give you. I'm not a world renowned speaker, but I feel that this should be really the main thing, because it's so important in this world, and that

children should never have to ask "Why? Why did this happen?"

We have to help, something, to do something to help, that nothing like this ever happens again. And who's that young little lady that sits in the back? Right here with the long hair. This one. She was awake and listening. I'm surprised.

[Laughter]

What is your name? Juliette? Oh, what a beautiful name! No wonder I noticed you. Look at her. She looked so intent. She was listening.

>> Bill Benson: Thank you, Regina.

>> Regina Spiegel: OK.

[Applause]

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.