UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM
FIRST PERSON SERIES
FIRST PERSON ANNA GROSZ
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Remote CART Captioning

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>> Bill Benson: Good morning, 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 17th year of the First Person program. Our First Person today is Mrs. Anna Grosz, whom we shall meet shortly.

This 2016 season of *First Person* is made possible by the generosity of the Louis Franklin Smith Foundation, with additional funding from the Arlene and Daniel Fisher Foundation. We are grateful for their sponsorship.

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 of our *First Person* guests serves as a volunteer here at this museum. Our program will continue twice-weekly until mid-August. The museum's website, listed on the back of your program, provides information about each of our upcoming *First Person* guests. The address is www.ushmm.org.

Anyone interested in keeping in touch with the museum and its programs can complete the Stay Connected card in your program or speak with a museum representative at the back of the theater. In doing so, you will receive an electronic copy of Anna Grosz's biography so that you can remember and share her testimony after you leave here today.

Anna will share her "First Person" account of her experience during the Holocaust and as a survivor for about 45 minutes. If time allows we will have an opportunity for you to ask Anna questions.

Today's program will be live-streamed on the museum's website. This means people will be joining the program via a link from the museum's website and watching with us today from across the country and around the world. A recording of this program will be made available on the museum's website. And we invite those who are here in the auditorium today to also join us on the web when the rest of our programs in April will be live-streamed. Please visit the First Person website, listed on the back of your program, for more details.

For our web audience, if you would like to use Twitter to ask a question, send a picture, or write a comment during the program, please feel free to do so using #ushmm.

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

Anna Grosz was born into a Jewish family on April 20, 1926, in Racsa, Transylvania, part of Romania, as Anna Seelfreund. Anna celebrated her 90th birthday yesterday.

>> [Applause]

>> Bill Benson: The arrow on this map points to Racsa.

These photos taken in 1919 show Anna's parents, Samuel and Ilona Seelfreund. Samuel owned a vineyard and was a wine merchant, while Ilona cared for Anna and her five sisters.

In 1940, Racsa fell under Hungarian rule. Jewish people in Racsa became subject to anti-Semitic laws. Under the new laws, Anna's father's vineyard was confiscated and he was conscripted into the Hungarian Labor Service. Samuel never returned home.

This photo from 1943 shows Anna and her sisters. In order from left to right is Clara, Elizabeth, Margaret, Margaret's daughter Suzanna, Violet, Anna, Gisela.

In March 1944, Nazi Germany occupied Hungary. Hungarian officials agreed to turn over hundreds of thousands of Hungarian Jews to the custody of the Germans. Anna, her sisters and her mother were placed into the Satu-Mare ghetto, indicated by the circle on this map, and then deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. The blue arrows point to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Nazi authorities selected Anna and three of her sisters for forced labor while they sent her mother and two other sisters to the gas chambers.

In June 1944, Anna and her remaining three sisters were sent to Stutthof concentration camp, indicated here with the red arrow. Later they were transferred to Praust, a subcamp of Stutthof.

In February 1945, the SS evacuated most of the prisoners, including Anna's three sisters, marching them on foot. Soviet troops liberated them around March 11, 1945. Anna was left behind with other injured and sick prisoners because she had previously broken her leg. On March 23, 1945, Soviet troops liberated some 600 prisoners including Anna. Anna later reunited with her sisters, Gisela and Clara, and found out her sister, Elizabeth, had been shot during the forced march.

We close with this photograph of Anna in 1946. Anna would remain in Romania until emigrating to the U.S. in 1964.

Anna together with her husband Emory Grosz and their two young sons, Alex and Andrew, were allowed after much difficulty to leave Romania and begin their new life in the United States. They settled in New York where Emory went to work as a fabric cutter in New York City's Garment District. Anna found work as a seamstress in a clothing factory working with fellow Hungarian-speaking Holocaust survivors and refugees. Anna worked at the same place for the next 27 years, driving 2 ½ hours to and from work each day.

After finishing high school their two sons attended university and went on to very successful careers and are now retired. Alex was an attorney at the U.S. Patent Office. Andrew was a geologist with the federal government. Anna has four grandchildren and a 5-year old great grandson.

After their retirement Anna and Emory moved to the Washington, DC area in 2003. Anna's husband suffered a stroke in 1999 and Anna cared for him until he passed away in 2009. She also was the caregiver for one of her sisters prior to her death and for her sister's husband.

Anna now volunteers with this museum's Visitor Services. You will find her at the Visitors Desk on Tuesdays from 10:00 am until 2:00 pm. Anna has spoken about her Holocaust experience to children at local schools. She recently spoke to 500 students at a high school in West Virginia.

Anna's son Alex and his wife Carla, and Anna's niece Suzanna are here with Anna today. Suzanna also volunteers here at the museum.

With that, I would like you to join me in welcoming our First Person, Anna Grosz.

>> [Applause]

>> Bill Benson: Anna, thank you so much for being willing to join us today and be our First Person. We have so much for you to share with us and we have so little time, so we will start right away.

You were just 13, Anna, when World War II began with Germany's invasion of Poland, September 1, 1939. Before we turn to all that happened to you and your family during the war and the Holocaust, let's start first with you telling us a little bit about your family, your community, and you in the years before the war began.

>> Anna Grosz: Yes. Hello first. Thank you for coming to listen to my story. I have to tell that Bill made a mistake. I am not 90 because I turned the 9 to a 6, like this. So I'm 60 not 90.

>> [Laughter]

[Applause]

>> Anna Grosz: I have a short time to tell my story but I'm going to try to take just the essence. In one year what leads to the family and all of us Jewish people is unbelievable. The torture and the humiliation and something that I sometimes think, Am I still normal? I doubt it sometimes, you know.

Before the war we had a nice family life. My father was a wine merchant. I had five sisters. So there were six girls. The older girls were sent to high school and the younger girls were in school. I was only 14 years old when the Hungarian occupied Transylvania. Everybody will know this because that's how they make the horror movies, from Transylvania.

The first thing what they did, they stopped the Jewish people to go to high school. So that was the first tragedy for me because I couldn't go to high school like my older sisters.

>> Bill Benson: I'm going to ask you just a couple of questions before we go there, if you don't mind. I hope later you'll talk more about what that loss of education meant to you. But your father, he had been a decorated soldier in the First World War, hadn't he?

>> Anna Grosz: Yes, he was. In the First World War he was in Hungary. And because the Germans lost the war, in the First World War also, it became Romania. And the same thing happened in the Second World War because the Hungary allied the Germans. They gave it back to the Hungarians. So that's why we became Hungarians again.

My father married my mother in Romania so he remained in Romania.

>> Bill Benson: Anna --

>> Anna Grosz: As I said before --

>> Bill Benson: One more question.

>> Anna Grosz: Yes?

>> Bill Benson: You told me your parents, both your mother and father, were very respected members of the community. Can you tell us about that?

>> Anna Grosz: Yes. I could say they were very honored people because my father was very correct man. Everyone who bought the wine and the brandy from him, they bought it in advance because they knew that he will deliver it 100% what he sold.

My parents -- what I had, I had no school education but I have it from my parents and my very strict grandmother. They taught us manners and discipline. So when she died, I wasn't so sorry for her because I did not like what she wanted me to do. [Laughter]

Let me go back to the family life, what we had. We lived in peace. Everybody had a job. My older sisters were in school. Gisela did not go to school because we had a little business at home also, a textile store. I helped out my father with going to the vineyard, arranged for workers and everything.

One day -- we did not know anything that happened in the world. We had two stations on the radio, Budapest and [Indiscernible]. We did not know what happened in the world that the Germans occupied already or something. Nothing about the war. Only that they occupied Transylvania and then changed everything. Schools, offices, everything in Hungarian from Romanian.

Not long after that started, they took away the license from the store. They did not let Jewish people out without the yellow star. They couldn't keep non-Jewish help. So from one to the other, we were not allowed to even go to the street without that yellow star.

In May 4, Transylvania was occupied on March -- the 4th of March, 1940.

>> Bill Benson: 1940.

>> Anna Grosz: 1940. In 1944, Hungary was the last country that the Germans occupied from the whole Europe. In 1940.

So when they did all the things to us, that they did not let us out. Humiliation, even a gypsy said I am what I am but I am not a Jew. So we were totally humiliated. I don't know, to me that's even worse than suffering the humiliation.

>> Bill Benson: And Anna, after the Hungarians did all of these terrible things to you, they took away your family business, they took away the textile business --

>> Anna Grosz: They took away everything.

>> Bill Benson: How did your family -- you had a lot of mouths to feed. How did your family manage to make it?

>> Anna Grosz: My father took care of that before. We had flour, bread. We had brandy -- what we sold, because we had the brandy machine also, we sold that, even to help other people.

So it came the day, May 4, family by family they took all of us in the synagogue. They said that we can take food with us for four days.

>> Bill Benson: Do you mind if I go back and ask you a couple of questions?

>> Anna Grosz: Sure.

>> Bill Benson: Before that happened, your father was conscripted into one of the Hungarian labor battalions.

>> Anna Grosz: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: Tell us about that.

>> Anna Grosz: Well, the worst thing was -- first thing and the worst thing was they took for forced labor all the young men from about 18 to 45 or so. They took all the men who was the heart of the people and remain were the children and the old people with the young people. They took them to forced labor, in the country and also I think in other parts of Hungary. They worked so hard. They tortured them.

I don't know. I still don't have the answer for that. If they wanted to kill us because we were the enemy, the Jewish people, why did they have to torture us before that? Why did they do that before the killings?

One example, who did not happen to me but to my husband, it was two Jewish people there who were forced laborers. A Hungarian soldier who was the guard with them said, "You say that you are a stinky Jew." The man said, "Why should I say that?" And he said, "Because I told you so." So he said, "If you don't say that you are a stinky Jew, I'm going to beat you." So he said -- he went to the other people and he said, "You say also that you are a stinky Jew." And he said, "Why should I say that? I am a college professor." "If you don't say that, I'm going to beat you." He did not say that. And he started to beat him until he was half dead. Then he said, "I am a stinky Jew." So this is -- similar humiliation happened, which I can't say all of them but it happened.

Let me go back.

>> Bill Benson: Yes. You were going to tell us about your father. They took him away and you never saw him again.

>> Anna Grosz: My father was sent in a camp. He was a translator for a while from German to Hungarian. He was sent a postcard, near Budapest, in the camp. We never heard after that of him, what happened to him. We didn't know what happened.

After we were taken, the whole little town, 50 Jewish families, they took us in the synagogue and we stayed there for about two or three days. And that synagogue, the children and the old people [Inaudible] in the throat. It was a terrible thing. We didn't know why and what's going to happen after that.

After four days they put us in carriages. The non-Jewish people had to carry us about 37-kilometers from our homes in a ghetto where only Jewish people could live there. They took the houses from non-Jewish people to have room there. We didn't stay too long there. And then they said take food for four days with you. And you still didn't know what happened. I shouldn't say a surprise. It was a shock to us because it came only that we didn't know what happened before that in the world. So in the ghetto we stayed there for about -- sweeping down the floors, mostly children and old women because men were not there.

And after four days they took I don't know how many people, took them to the train station, and they put them in a wagon there. When they took our family, I was the 92nd in that wagon. We didn't know where is my mother where is my sister because they pushed us in. It was a battle in the corner of the wagon. To go out, they did a dance. From time to time the wagon opened to empty. But to stay four days in that train, the children cried, the old men prayed, some of them cursed, "Why did this happen to us?"

I tried to take one of my most terrible days from the whole deportation or Death March, I thought is that, the traveling four days, and after that they let us out in Auschwitz. Later I found out that not that was the most terrible day in my life.

They let us out. It was at night. We were all dizzy and didn't know what happened to us. Dogs barking, the German soldiers said, "Fast, fast, fast." And they took us to a place. And the music played. Jewish music players played. They wanted the chaos, make it a little bit more supported.

So they took us. A German officer came with a stick. My sister had my older sister's baby, 3-year-old girl, in her hand. He came to her and asked, "Is this your baby?" And she said no. Then she said, "Give it to her mother." Because if a baby take away from the mother, they tried to cry. So she gave it back to the mother. But if she wouldn't, then she would be asked to go in the left side where the people were killed. They didn't even make a difference one will live or one will die.

So my mother, my older sister with the baby, and my younger sister, 14 years old, was taken to one side and Elizabeth, my older sister, 25, Gisela, 20, I was 18, Clara was 16, on another side. They took us in a room. First of all, we had to take off our clothes and then sit in a chair and they --

>> Bill Benson: Shaved you?

>> Anna Grosz: They took us, cut off our hair, anywhere we had hair. I don't know what I said because I don't think that I said anything because I was so tired from the four days traveling in that train. What happened to me, it happened. I couldn't comprehend what happened.

So all four of us sisters was taken in another room where we were disinfected with some white dust. And after that we got a gray dress with a number on the sleeve because they did not have time to tattoo us like other people before they did because we were the last people who were occupied. Hungary was the last.

>> Bill Benson: You told me that because there were just so many coming in from Hungary they just didn't have the time to tattoo you and that's why.

>> Anna Grosz: Yes. Because so many, the last ones were Hungarian, the last country was Hungary. Many places already the war was over already but they still put the Jewish people in trains and deported to Auschwitz, Hungary did. They were already liberated some places because it was 1944 and 1945 was over. Right?

So we were in Auschwitz. Yes, they put us -- we slept in a stall. One person came and she said -- she was from Czechoslovakia. She was there for four years already in the concentration camp. She spoke Hungarian also. We asked her what's happening to us. "Where are our parents?" And she said, "You see that smoke? There are your parents." It was very close, Auschwitz, to the crematory room. We thought that she is crazy. What? We didn't even know the word, what crematory is, and how about believe that they killed there in the crematorium. We didn't believe her. We said she's a bad person, that's all.

So they took us in Auschwitz, put us in some beds. There was no covering. Every day they counted us, in the morning and at night. And the food was terrible, terrible, some beets, some other, cooked, a little piece of margarine in the morning, and a very small piece of bread. We had to stay in the line. Always we stayed in the line at night ad in the morning. They chose people who were very skinny, who were very fat. They took them away. You never heard of them again. Just remained, people who were strong-looking. But they always did that selection, all the time when we were there.

So one said that they choose people for work. We were so happy for our sisters and a few other girls from the town, that we go for work anywhere but not stay here. So they chose us for work. Or for a while -- we had to hide Elizabeth, my older sister, because she was skinnier than the three of us and smaller.

So they chose us for work, 800 of us who looked fit to work. That's what they said. They took us to Stutthof where we stayed one day. By the train they took us there. We saw the sun. We saw the nature. Oh, we thought, what a nice thing they presented us to go to work. A prize, that's what we said. So when we arrived in Stutthof, they did again the selection. We were not all good for work but the four of us still remained there, the sisters.

>> Bill Benson: Just a minute. I'll jump in.

>> Anna Grosz: Yes?
>> Bill Benson: In addition, you would line up five in a row. And besides you and your three sisters, there was a fifth woman who stayed with you throughout.
>> Anna Grosz: Yes. We had to stay five in a row. So we had one person there who had nobody there, no sisters, nobody. She's still alive, 94 years old and she has the dementia. Yes.
>> Bill Benson: So from Stutthof they took you to a place called Praust, which was a brand new camp.
>> Anna Grosz: Yes. They took us to Praust which before was a big farm. The place was not ready yet to work. It was terrible hot. It's near Gdansk. The sun was burning. We had short sleeve dress and short dress. We had to go to a place and field the straw sacks that would be our bed. All day long we had to do that. And some girls put some paper on their legs to cover it. And the paper was cement. So then they took it off, it came off with the skin. What did they do? They sent us back to Stutthof because they couldn't work anymore and they brought new people instead of them. Of course, we never heard of them because in Stutthof was another crematory.
>> Bill Benson: Anna, you told me that it was always 800 women, as you were saying. So if some were ill, they sent them back and then they would bring back the same number so you had 800.

And then you were forced to do exceptionally hard labor. Tell us about that.
>> Anna Grosz: Well, we had to do airport from that big --
>> Bill Benson: You were forced to build an airfield. Right?
>> Anna Grosz: Yes. We had to take first the vegetables from that farm. It was carrots, beets mostly, and a few potatoes. We were told we cannot take from there to eat because we are going to be punished for that if you do that. But we were very hungry because since the first day we arrived there was no food, no water. The water was rusty. So we couldn't drink or eat. And some people still took carrots and ate it or a potato or something. But the number was here on the sleeve. And the guards saw that, then took the number.

And at night when we went home from work, the guard gave it to -- there were two women. I think they were at least 250 or 230 pounds. It was their job to do the punishment and also to arrange the food for us. So in the first night, the guard gave the number because the girls took the food. The punishment was like that. She had to bend off and the two devils came. I don't know how to call them. And they gave 25 lashes on the back of them. And the next day they have to present for work no matter how they felt. That was first day. We didn't know what the punishment would be.

So the work started. Our work was to fill sand. A plane came. Fill the cart. And another train came and another. All day we had to fill those carts with the sand.
>> Bill Benson: So just to be sure we all understand. You were filling train cars full of sand. That was your job, to fill sand.
>> Anna Grosz: It was not full of sand. For example, my sister Clara could not work as hard because she was 16, like us. We had to work harder to be full, that cart. I don't know how to say that in English. It looks like this somehow. That doesn't matter.
>> Bill Benson: And the sand was used then to make the pavement.
>> Anna Grosz: Make the pavement, yes. And French prisoners were far away from us. They build the guard to put the airplanes in at night. They still have it here, too. I never saw it. That's what happened. We had this work with very little food. We all lost weight. That's what we did all summer.

Then we had a guard with us. There were many guards but one we had from Romania. He spoke in Romanian. He was a nice guy. He never gave a number to the German woman who was his girlfriend. But the other guards, they gave the number. And almost every day we had somebody get punished. But we have to stay and see the punishment like this. You tense up. And did not have dinner until all the people who were inside come out and get the dinner.

That was a sadist thing to do. I don't know why, I repeat again, why did they have to torture us before they kill us? I don't know this. Many things I don't know.

So finally -- I have to make my story short. It came Christmas time. They wanted us to entertain them. So they provide a piano, violin, and there were many talented people, opera singers. They said everybody should go who has a talent.

I left out something. That Romanian soldier, somehow he regretted but he had to go in the German Army. He liked me to sing for him Romanian songs, popular ballads. Every time he was with us, he wanted me to sing for him. At that time I had a very pretty voice, inherited from my mother.

So the Christmas party came and all the people were there and presented what they do. And I was sitting in the top of a bunk bed. I was just watching. And then that Romanian soldier came to me and he said, "Why didn't you come to sing also? I wanted you to sing Romanian also." And I said, "I don't think that I was such a talent to go there." But he said, "I want you to come." He helped me get down from the bed. I fall. I broke my leg.

Now, with the small sickness they sent back the people to Stutthof because they needed another people who was able to work. If you were sick for two days, they sent back. Now I said this is my end because with the broken leg, what can they do. So my sister begged this officer -- it was a soldier, I think, to not send me back to Stutthof. And because he somehow felt guilty because he wanted me to go to sing, and the one who decided to send back people, it was his girlfriend, the big woman who did the punishment. It was a miracle that they put my leg in cast. Never happened. Never heard of any miracle like this.

So they put my leg in cast in the morning. My leg became like this, swollen. They had to take it off and put another cast. No injection or put me to sleep or something. Why? I don't know. A human being can survive anything. I think his own death, also. I think I'm never going to die. I'm going to survive my death, too.

>> [Laughter]

>> Bill Benson: Anna, after you broke your leg and this miracle occurred, that they put a cast on you, it wasn't long after that that then they emptied Praust.

>> Anna Grosz: Three weeks after that started, they took the people from all camps, take to march. The crematory could not destroy them because the war was very short to end. So all the people have to march away from the camp. When the time came that our camp had to leave, I couldn't walk. So they took off my shoes because other 26 people were chosen who could not march. And a few guards and the people who cooked there because other camps came and stayed there for a night. And after that they marched further. So when our camp, it was time to march, my three sisters were able to march but I wasn't able with the other 26 people who couldn't walk.

>> Bill Benson: You were left behind.

>> Anna Grosz: I was left behind, taken of my shoes because I don't need shoes because the 26 unable to walk people are going to be killed. I didn't even was afraid. Yes, they put some in our food that they didn't let us think. It was brown. Medication or something. So we couldn't even think clear. They left me there. I thought I'm going to stay here by myself killed and my three sisters left. I couldn't even cry.

I was sitting there and the second miracle happened to me. One was that they put my leg in cast, which never, never, nowhere happened. And then a girl came who worked in the kitchen. She asked me, "Could you do some sewing?" I said yes. My mother wanted all of us to learn some sewing. And then she said, "We are making some civilian clothes for the SS." The German people. "If you can sew, you come with us and you will do that job." She provided me shoes. I survived that because they took me and I did the sewing with those.

So what happened, the camps all night came from other camps. But they marched for a long time already. Every day died I don't know how many people. They made a big hole, a big, big hole, and just throw them dead in that hole.

When the time came that our German people wanted to go, the guards -- the girl who had with the sewing came to me and she said "You stay here because you're going to be liberated." We have to go again. They want us go with them."

So our camp left also. And I remained there. For two days it was quiet. Then we heard that the whole airport was blown up, what we did, because it was bombed from one place to the other. They blew out the whole --

>> Bill Benson: The Germans blew up their own airfield.

>> Anna Grosz: The whole airport. And a block also blew up with that who were people who couldn't walk. They were dead also.

I could already walk a little bit and a few other people. We walked and hided in the basement where they used to keep the food. So for another two days it was quiet. We had -- somebody came out from the basement. I came out also. I felt very dizzy. I saw from far away two dots. And those two dots became bigger and bigger and then became two Russian soldiers. So that meant that we were liberated, came more Russian soldiers.

When I came out from the basement, I was dizzy, I was sick. I got Typhus there in the basement. Russian people did not care too much of us because they still were searching for Germans. But they took me in. I really couldn't think. I woke up in a house, sort of this is a hospital. I would say I stayed there, I don't know, maybe two weeks or so. I didn't know what happened to me. When I woke up, I saw a Russian nurse dead near me. She died of Typhus.

And no hair again. They cut my hair the second time, which my hair grew in a year there. And they gave me some clothes because they took my old clothes which was filled with lice. I never knew that clothes can be lice also. But in our head, I didn't think I had lice because I was working with those people. But they took off my hair. They gave me an outfit. I still like to say a skirt like a sack and a blouse. And just nothing on my head. They said now you can go. So now I was liberated.

>> Bill Benson: In the little time we have left, one of the things you said to me is even though you were liberated you didn't feel happy at all.

>> Anna Grosz: Yes. I said -- I'm getting there.

>> [Laughter]

>> Anna Grosz: Yes. I was out from that hospital. I saw -- I never saw a mirror the whole year. But I saw myself in a window. I looked at myself. You know, lost weight in that outfit that I had, and no hair. I think I started to laugh. That was my first laugh.

And I go somewhere. So I didn't know where to go. I heard somewhere music. The Polish people and the French started to celebrate the peace. It was March 23 or 21. And I heard music, which I didn't hear music still in my life. So I went to hear the music. I didn't know how I look or something. I was sitting like this. Somebody came at my back and he said, "Mademoiselle." Then I had the second laugh. [Laughter]

So a French prisoner came. He asked me to dance, to go to dance. Then I started to cry. So I spoke Hungarian. He spoke French. But we understand each other. He find out who I am. And I find who is he. But I didn't go to dance with him. Then later he came with a pack of cigarettes and a piece of bread. He said also in French -- French is a little bit similar to Romanian. And I understand that if I want him to take me to Paris, to France. I thought I want to go to France.

So I didn't know where my sisters are. I knew unfortunately that I did not want to believe that my parents are still there in the smoke. All of a sudden, people who were around, all the people who was liberated. One girl come to me and looks at me long and she said, "Don't you have a sister Gisela? And I said, "Yes, I do have." "And one Carla? I was with them in" -- I never know where I put my keys but I remember what happened then. Everything I remember. I could go with closed eyes and find my bed or anything what happened there.

So she said, "Your sisters are liberated." She said Clara and Gisela. "And how about Elizabeth," I asked. She said she was shot on the way -- when she was marching on the day of the liberation. The Germans killed her because she couldn't walk.

So I find out that two out of my whole family are alive. I had to believe. I did not want to believe. I did not want to live. I didn't know where my sisters are, even if they are alive. We went from one train station to the other who were liberated and nobody helped us, not with food, not with going home. I thought an airplane will come and take us home, you know? But for two months did not come an airplane. We were just wandering there. Nobody cared of us at all.

I am thinking this was my most terrible day in my life. It's hard to find one because more terrible days in my life. But the most terrible day was when my two sisters came home, we met in our empty house, robbed house, knowing that we are still, the three of us, young girls, not trained for life,

not knowing what to start with our life. First, leave and how. And another problem, there was no man to marry them because they all were killed in the forced labor. And another terrible thing happened to me when I saw in a person my mother's dress, on the street. I got hysterical inside in my empty house but I couldn't go out or say something to her.

After that, when we started a new life. By the time -- oh, I thought this was Brandy.

>> [Laughter]

>> Anna Grosz: This is just water. You cheated me.

>> Bill Benson: I have the brandy. [Laughter]

>> Anna Grosz: Oh, I could talk another three hours.

>> Bill Benson: Anna, we are going to close the program in just a moment.

We'll be at the close of our program shortly. We do have time for a couple of questions. I want you to know that it is our tradition at *First Person* that our First Person has the last word. So before we finish, I'm going to turn back to Anna again to close our program. Needless to say we were only able to just catch a glimpse of all that Anna could have shared with us. And we could have had you talk for three more days.

>> Anna Grosz: Oh, yeah.

>> Bill Benson: And what we don't even begin to touch upon is what happened after the war, not only immediately after the war, the circumstances that Anna began to describe for us, getting married, and then spending the next 19 years living under Communist rule before Anna and her two sons and family were able to leave and come to the United States. We could have a whole afternoon just beginning to touch on that.

I'm going to ask you if would please stay seated with us because Anna will get the last word and we want you to hear what she has to say. After Anna concludes the program I'm going to ask you all to stand because our photographer, Joel, is going to take a picture of Anna with you as the backdrop. So that makes for a wonderful photograph for Anna and for all of us. And then Anna, when she's done, she will remain on the stage here. So, please, absolutely feel free afterwards to come up and ask her a question, shake her hands, give her a hug, take a photograph, whatever you would like to do.

I want to first thank all of you for being with us today. I remind you we will have a *First Person* each Wednesday and Thursday through the middle of August. So we hope that you can come back. Also, for our remaining programs in April, we will live-stream them so you will have an opportunity to also hear them over the internet, and we hope that you do.

So very briefly we have time for a couple of questions. And I'm going to turn, first, to a question from our Twitter audience. And as I'm doing that, I'd ask that if anybody would like to ask a question, we'll have time for a couple, please go to one of the two microphones in the aisle if you would and line up there. This will give you a moment to get there. We're not obviously going to get to everybody's questions, but, again, Anna will remain with us.

First a question from our Twitter audience. Question one of two from students at Christianburg Middle School.

Anna, what experiences or transitions did you find with your faith? Did you lose your faith in God? P.S., our students are loving this opportunity to hear you and talk to you.

>> Anna Grosz: I have an answer for that. I was raised to believe in God. Many of us lost their faith because they asked why did God let happen this with the innocent people. I think like that God has nothing to do with this. People did that. People did that to us. And any bad thing that happens, not God did it, people did it to us. That's what I believe.

>> Bill Benson: Thanks.

We'll see if we have anybody from our audience. And if not -- we have one here. I think this will probably be our one question from the audience. And, then, again, when Anna's done, please come up to the stage and talk with her and ask her any questions that you would like to then.

>> Anna Grosz: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: Make your question as brief as you can. I'll repeat it just to make sure that everybody hears it. Then Anna can respond.
>> Anna, thank you so much. We will never forget you. My question is: During the years of Communism in Romania, were you persecuted again for being Jewish?
>> Bill Benson: During your years in Romania, were you persecuted for being Jewish?
>> Anna Grosz: Again?
>> Bill Benson: During your years in Romania after the war, for the 19 years you would remain there, were you persecuted for being Jewish?
>> Anna Grosz: Not for being Jewish but to not be Communist, to be on the list that if you want to leave the country, which we did, could not have the same rights or could not go, the children also, to higher schools. The same like the Hungarians did. So it wasn't a pleasure to live in a Communist country. You had a job but it was so little or small, I don't know how to say it, that you couldn't live with it. So we had to do something with one word, steal. And if you stole, if they found it, they put you in jail. They said there were three kinds of people in Romania: who is in jail, who was in jail, and who will be in jail.

So we were very happy when after 19 years they let us out from Romania. Israel and America paid for our passports. We were lucky that my two children was young enough to continue here the education.

That's my answer. If you have another answer.

I have something without asking me I would say. When you buy a house, the agent says it's location, location, location. I would say education, education, and education.
>> [Applause]
>> Anna Grosz: Because they took that away from me and I miss it for all my life. There are so many things that I would enjoy and know if I would have the education and they did not let me do that. They took that away from us. That's like they would take my arm from me because all my rest of the family, they were educated. But I was that age when Romania was occupied. I was 14, finishing elementary school. So that's why I say you have the opportunity here to have the education and that nobody can take it away from you. It's more than millions of dollars, the education, what you have.

But don't ask me one question. This is not my first time that I'm here. And I had a question. It was a young girl. She asked me could you forgive and forget what they did to you. And I said, no, I can't, and I don't want to. Because when took Jesus Christ to crucify, he said don't punish them, God, because they don't know what they are doing. Right? But the Germans knew what they are doing so how can I forgive and forget? This is not a small thing to forgive and forget. I will not. And I won't forgive and forget. So don't ask me that question. [Laughter] Anything else.
>> Bill Benson: I think we are ready now to close the program. Anna, thank you so very much.
>> Anna Grosz: I thank you all for listening to me. I could talk for more than an hour. They made a good choice for me to talk because I was punished as a small girl who talk too much.
>> [Laughter]
>> Bill Benson: Thank you.
>> [Applause]