UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM
FIRST PERSON SERIES
FIRST PERSON: AGI GEVA
Thursday, August 4, 2016
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Remote CART Captioning

Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) captioning is provided in order to facilitate communication accessibility and may not be a totally verbatim record of the proceedings.
This transcript is being provided in rough-draft format.

>> Alesia Fishman: Good morning. Welcome to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. My name is Alesia Fishman and I'm the Host of today's program *First Person*. Thank you for joining us. We are in our 17th year of the *First Person* program. Our First Person today is Agi Geva, whom we shall meet shortly.

The 2016 season of *First Person* is made possible through 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 weekly 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 through mid-August. The museum's website, www.ushmm.org, provides information about each of our upcoming *First Person* guests.

Anyone interested in keeping in touch with the museum and its programs can complete the Stay Connected card in your program. I usually have one but you probably can see what it looks like. Or you can speak with the museum representative at the back of the theater after our program today. In doing so you will also receive an electronic copy of Agi's biography so that you can remember and share her testimony after you leave here today.

Agi will share with us her First Person account of her experience during the Holocaust and as a survivor for about 45 minutes. If we have time at the end of our program, we'll have an opportunity for you to ask Agi a few questions. We have prepared a brief slide presentation to help with her introduction.

Agi was born Agnes Laszlo in 1930 in Budapest, Hungary. This map highlights Hungary.

The arrow on this map points to Budapest.

Agi was one of two daughters of Rosalia and Zoltan Laszlo. Here we see Agi and her sister, Zsuzsi. They spent the first six years of their lives in a farming village where their father managed a large farm. Here we see Agi's parents, Rosalia and Zoltan.

Due to her father's failing health and anti-Semitic legislation prohibiting Jews from working in agriculture business, the family moved to Miskolc where Agi's mother managed a boardinghouse. This photo is of the home.

The arrow on this map of Hungary points to Miskolc.

On March 19, 1944, the same day German forces occupied Hungary, Agi's father died. Agi, her sister and mother joined a group of 30 Jews sent to work in the fields outside the town. After a

month they returned to Miskolc where they lived in the ghetto for a few weeks before being confined to a brick factory on the outskirts of town.

The following month, the family was deported to Auschwitz. This map depicts the deportations of Jews from Hungarian ghettos to Auschwitz.

Later, Agi, her mother and sister were interned at the Plaszow concentration camp. The arrow on this map of major Nazi camps shows the location of Plaszow. When the Soviet Army approached Plaszow in the fall, the entire camp, including the three women, were sent back to Auschwitz for a few weeks then were moved to several labor camps.

On April 28, 1945, Agi was liberated by American soldiers. This photo of Agi is from 1950, after she emigrated to Israel.

Today Agi resides in the Washington, D.C. area. She moved to the United States 13 years ago after living in Israel since 1949, where she worked in the insurance field for 32 years. She has two children, a daughter, Dorit, who lives here, and a son, Johnnie, who lives in Israel. She has four grandchildren and four great grandchildren. Agi speaks four languages fluently: Hebrew, Hungarian, German and English.

With that, I would like to ask you to join me in welcoming Mrs. Agi Geva.

>> [Applause]

>> Alesia Fishman: Agi, thank you so much for joining us and for your willingness to spend time with us. In a short hour, you have so much to tell us so that we're going to get started right away.

I'd like to start by talking about your life, your community, and your family in the years before the war. Can you tell me about that?

>> Agi Geva: The first six years my sister, Zsuzsi, and I spent at the farm. My dad was the director of the place. We had quite a nice -- normal for us. My parents brought German nannies to care for us so we spoke fluent German. My dad kept telling us to know the language well because we need something that can't be taken away from us. Later it proved really useful.

Then we moved to Miskolc, as Alesia mentioned. My mother had to provide for us because my dad had a heart attack that he never, ever recovered completely. He was fired in 1936 from his job. Anti-Semitism wasn't that much that year, actually, that it should come to this but that's what happened.

>> Alesia Fishman: Earlier you told me that you went to school in an unusual way. How did you get to school?

>> Agi Geva: Yes. That was in 1935. We went to school with horse and carriage. There was a carriage with two horses. And in the winter there were warm bricks under our feet and blankets on our knees. That's how we went to school.

>> Alesia Fishman: A little different.

>> Agi Geva: A little different.

>> Alesia Fishman: You said you learned German. Did you also learn English?

>> Agi Geva: When we were 10, my dad thought that we should start another language and we learned English, actually. And at school we learned French, Latin. What else? I think that's it.

>> Alesia Fishman: So the Nazis, as I mentioned before, but the Nazis occupied Hungary on March 19, 1944, which was a very important day in your life. And you alluded to this already. This was the day that your father died. Can you tell me about what happened then and then you went on to work in the fields and then in the ghetto.

>> Agi Geva: That day was really very traumatic. My dad died on that day. And later we got news that the family from Budapest couldn't come to the funeral. My mom understood that we were unoccupied and nobody could travel out of the cities no more, no Jewish people. When we came back from the funeral, every corner there was a German soldier with a gun. And it was really scary. Changed our lives completely in the next few days. We had to wear a yellow star. Every Jewish person had to wear a yellow star on our jacket or blouses. And we were really, really scared.

There were rumors that who was ready to work in the fields and went to the municipality to swear loyalty to Hungary will not be deported. So my mom organized some friends, 30, 35 friends, and we went to the fields. Then a few weeks it was really traumatic. It was very hard to get up at 5:00 in the

morning and stay in the fields till the evening and do hard job that we never did before. But we didn't think that will be the easiest but came later.
>> Alesia Fishman: So from there you worked in the fields for a few weeks hoping that you weren't going to be deported but next came the ghetto.
>> Agi Geva: One day they just told us that this morning we don't go to the fields, we are going back to Miskolc. And we understood that they went back on their promise that we won't be deported. We were not sure yet. We were taken to the ghetto. That meant a small apartment with five, six families. It was crowded. It was traumatic. It was uncomfortable. It was everything. I can just tell you, it was not enough food. There was not enough water. Everything. We thought the worst was going to happen to us.
>> Alesia Fishman: However, so the Nazis occupied Miskolc in March 1944. By the middle of June you were in a ghetto. And then you were taken to a brick factor for deportation.
>> Agi Geva: Yes.
>> Alesia Fishman: And there were going to be trains waiting to take you.
>> Agi Geva: The brick factory was actually a place that had no sides in walls. It only a ceiling, a roof. That meant we could have escaped, but my mom was afraid that we are going to be seen and one of us might not make it. And she was scared all the time that we should stay together. So she doesn't risk to escape.

So we were waiting there for trains. And we thought the trains would be like trains that you usually travel in, with windows and seats, and sandwiches, and conversations. We were not afraid of this at all. But when the trains came, what we saw, these were cattle cars. We could never, ever imagine that they can put people into these cattle cars and travel in them. But that's what happened.

There were soldiers with guns all around us. We had to get into these cars. Standing places, put in as many people as they could and closed the door on us. There was only a small opening on the roof for light and air that was really not sufficient. And the train started to move. And it was the worst of the worst part. Of course, I would have been happier back in the ghetto as uncomfortable as it was. There were pregnant people, sick people, teenagers, small children. People were hysterical crying. They couldn't stop crying. They couldn't stop yelling. Some fainted. It was an impossible situation that I can't even describe well enough.
>> Alesia Fishman: How long was the trip? Do you recall?
>> Agi Geva: It was three days. And we didn't know when it was day, when it was night. It's indescribable. We thought it was the worst of the worst situation.
>> Alesia Fishman: And when the trains finally stopped, where were you and what did you see?
>> Agi Geva: Wherever we were we didn't know. We were in Auschwitz but we had no idea what it meant. We didn't know that it was a death camp. We didn't know it was a camp at all. We just didn't know.

What we saw was that in minutes they separated the men from the women, in minutes. We don't even know how it could happen so quickly. So a new hysterics started. People wanted to say goodbye to their brothers, husbands, sons. They begged the soldiers to do so. And in another few minutes they were gone. They were just taken out of the station and we never knew where they were going. And the women went in a different direction.
>> Alesia Fishman: And it was really important for your mother -- she started to realize, right, that it was -- people needed to look like they could work or could work and so what did she do?
>> Agi Geva: Actually when my mom saw what's happening, she was really, really sorry that she didn't try to escape from the brick factory. Everything would have been better, she said. But here she started to go -- at a certain point, all of us to go but she wanted to be there before to have a good look what's going to happen and what's going on there. She told us just to walk with the group. She will go to the beginning of the line, find out, and come back to tell us.

Of course, she was under gun point. She took a real risk. But she thought the risk would be worth if she didn't know what was happening and it turned out she was right. She saw German SS selecting the groups that came in front of them. And she saw that families were torn apart immediately. When a girl was begging an officer to please let her stay with her mother or vice versa, they

immediately separated between them. They didn't even give a chance. And then she saw that all older people, sick people, people with a child on their arm, were sent to the left side. She had no idea what it meant at that time. And she saw that to the right side were able-bodied people, more or less the same age. And then she heard that under 16, everybody was sent ultimately to the left side. She didn't know at that point what it meant.
>> Alesia Fishman: And so your mother tried to make sure you all went to the same side.
>> Agi Geva: She figured that we will not say our real age, that was 12 and 13. We will say 18 and 19. They might select us to be together. So she told us to take out our scarves and bind it in a way on our head that will make us look older. And it was that way. It might make me look older even now.
>> [Laughter]
>> Agi Geva: And then she wound her head in another way that she thought it would make her look younger. It was that way. So it might have been helpful, very helpful because all three of us were selected together to go to the right side. It was such and joy and such a relief when we found we were all together again but it wasn't very long lasting.
>> Alesia Fishman: And you told me that you had a bag with you. What did you take? You could bring a bag. What did you take?
>> Agi Geva: We could take a bag, we were told to go to our rooms before we left the house and just take stuff that we can carry. So I personally took a book I was reading, a new watch, a doll, a dress. I don't know what my sister took.
>> Alesia Fishman: And your mother? What did adults take? What did the grown-ups take?
>> Agi Geva: We didn't know at the time but it turned out that they took jewels, papers, documents, pictures, family pictures, money. They thought it might be helpful for bribery or anything else.

And we had to put down our bags, there was such hysterics, crying, begging to hold on to them but, of course, the soldiers pointed their guns at us and told us put it down and we had to.
>> Alesia Fishman: Can you tell me, also, a little bit about the food that you had there and the bunks?
>> Agi Geva: I think before, I have to tell you what happened. The next room we had to undress completely and leave all of our dresses in another corner. The hysterics and the crying and the beggings were even worse than ever before because when the grownups, including my mom, thought that they might take the bags away, then at least their clothes will stay on and they had in their pockets and in the lining of their dresses sewn in all of these jewels, moneys, family pictures. And when we had to undress, it was our last hope of ever having anything that was connected to home or to save us somehow.

So that was going on there. I can't even describe to you. We were standing there without clothes. It was very humiliating and very uncomfortable. We never saw our mom and her friends -- it was very humiliating. But then more humiliations followed. We were shaved from all hair on our body. When we looked at each other, we couldn't even recognize each other. It was terrible. And as if this wasn't enough, we were sprayed with a disinfectant that only animals were sprayed with. We knew no humans could be sprayed like this. So I can't describe you really what it felt like.

And then we were sent into the showers. We didn't know that we were lucky, very lucky that from our shower came water. We didn't know that in the other barracks, I mean on the left side, where other people were sent, it came gas. We didn't know it then and neither did my mom. So it was scary. Not enough that time but we didn't know when we found out.

Then we were taken to another place where we had to choose a piece of clothes and a pair of shoes. Nothing else. No underwear, no socks, nothing. Just a dress and a pair of shoes. Whether it fit or not, it was absolutely not important to anyone.

Then we were given bowls and blankets and taken to our barracks. And the bunks that looked like that. Five, six, seven people on each bunk. When someone wanted to get up, all the six, seven had to get up and someone wanted to turn over, everybody else had to turn over. It was horrible. But we had to do it.
>> Alesia Fishman: And from Auschwitz, you were selected for slave labor and sent to Plaszow.

>> Agi Geva: The selections were really scary. Every single day we were counted. We were standing outside in lines for hours until the kapos, the Germans, came and started to count us. And then after, it was daily in Auschwitz there were selections. And one day we were all selected together, at least my mom and sister and I, and were sent to the railway station again, to the cattle cars again. This time it took one hour. We went to Plaszow. That was a camp where the “Schindler's List” was filmed. We had a very, very hard time there.
>> Alesia Fishman: So they forced you to move rocks there. Is that correct?
>> Agi Geva: That was our daily work, to pick up rocks, take them up a hill and the next day to bring them back down. Because also not only humiliating, it was degrading and it was very hard work.
>> Alesia Fishman: You eventually went back to Auschwitz and faced even more selections when you returned.
>> Agi Geva: Yes. Plaszow, I just wanted to tell you, there were not only prisoners like us but it was a camp also of murderers, burglars from the prisons. We were scared not only from the Germans but also from our fellow prisoners. We had to look behind us. It was really scary.

Then we were taken -- when we heard the cannon shots, we thought the Russians are maybe liberating us, coming to the camp. But then the Germans quickly liquidated the camps and we were sent back to the railway station. This time we were really scared. We were very weak. We looked very bad, hopeless. This wagon trip took one day. My mom tried to console us that we have been through the worst places already, to Auschwitz to Plaszow. It can't be worse, she said. But when the doors opened and we simply saw where we were and it was back in Auschwitz. It was really something that we never, ever thought it might happen. We were more hopeless than ever.
>> Alesia Fishman: And what happened in that selection there?
>> Agi Geva: My mom saw -- there was one officer selecting surrounded by soldiers, keeping their guns on the person who was selected. She told us that because we are in such bad condition, she thinks she's in the best condition, she will go first and my sister second, and I looked worse than the two of them, I should be the third. She took a big chance here to tell us follow me wherever I will be sent and in case it's impossible, then ask for a working camp. The Germans will need workers all the time so just try.

The selecting officer was Mengele. We had no idea who he was at that time. We found out but we didn't know. So he sent my mom to the right. And then he sent my sister to the right. And me he sent to the left. And I looked at him and I said, Please, no, please, I would like to go to that side, pointing to the right. And he asked me, Why, what is there? I told him it's a work being camp. Then he realized he was talking German. He said you are a Hungarian transport. That's what they called us all the time, transport. "How can you speak German?" And here is the point my dad was right. Had I not spoken German, I wouldn't have made it. And he somehow liked the idea. He told me, How do you speak German? Started to ask questions. He told me, “Ok, go to the right.” Then my mom saw the conversations. She was sure she would never, ever see me again and knew exactly what was going to happen to me. She fainted. When I got there, she didn't even know that I was safe.
>> Alesia Fishman: So people sometimes ask you were you afraid of him, the well-known --
>> Agi Geva: People ask me, weren't you afraid of Mengele, talking to him? I said, no, I was afraid of my mom.
>> [Laughter]
>> Agi Geva: She told us what to do and I was supposed to do what she wanted me to do.
>> Alesia Fishman: So at one point your mother had you remove your glasses. Why did she do that?
>> Agi Geva: There were selections, as I told you, daily. And there was for factory workers in Germany. Sometimes they looked at strong feet, strong hands, strong eyes. They looked at the eyes. My mom said take off my glasses, fold into the side of her shoe to hide it, that I shouldn't look different than everybody else and we should be able to stay together. And the glasses we brought back. I don't know how she did it. I was saved because of it.
>> Alesia Fishman: Another story you were telling me about, while you were there, is the story of Lily, who was an opera singer. And she was in the camp with you.

>> Agi Geva: Yes. Also with her sister and her mother was sent to the left side of the selections and she was really desperate and very sad. She was some 10 years older than my sister and I. We found out that she was an opera singer in my hometown, in Miskolc. We started to ask her maybe to sing for us. She was so sad and so weak and so hungry and so desperate and so everything that it took a long time to persuade her. But when she started to sing, I can't even tell you what it meant to all of us. If I close my eyes, I just thought I'm back in the opera house in Miskolc listening to opera. She sang beautifully. After a couple of days she did sing to us and also the Germans were touched by it and invited her to sing in their headquarters. We were scared every time when she had to go whether she would come back.
>> Alesia Fishman: So you're back to Auschwitz the second time. And from there they do a selection for a work camp in Rochlitz. And that was late 1944. What happened when they took you? There was a selection. How many people went and what did you do when you got to Rochlitz?
>> Agi Geva: From Rochlitz, actually, they asked for people, for workers, for airplane spare part -- a screw factory. We were given -- after three days' trip in the wagon, it was worse than I could imagine from all the trips because it was winter. It was so cold. We were so not prepared -- we had no clothes. We had no food. We had no water. We had nothing to keep us warm. And this trip was dangerous. We thought we'll never make it without getting some part of us frozen. But somehow we did it. And when we got to Rochlitz, it was a relief to know that we were in a school, actually, where we were studying how to make things for the factory.
>> Alesia Fishman: And you told me while you were in the school, you ended up with a pencil and piece of paper.
>> Agi Geva: Oh. When they gave us, but for me personally, a pencil --
>> [Laughter]
>> Agi Geva: I was really even more happy. I found myself being responsible and a human being again. In Auschwitz, became the second time, actually, we had nothing but humiliation. They tattooed on our left arm a number, that we were supposed to be just this number. And it said Auschwitz, and the letter of A, and the number. And when I got to Rochlitz and held this pencil, I felt human again. We were sitting on chairs, in front of tables that we hadn't done the whole year before.
>> Alesia Fishman: So you were telling me, too, that you were making screws for airplane parts and your mother engaged in some acts of sabotage while you were there.
>> Agi Geva: From Rochlitz we were sent to Stuttgart and Stuttgart to the factory. And that was the real factory where the screws really went out to the airplanes. My sister was working at the control panels. I was making the screws, actually. And my mom was controlling -- was at the filing stone where if the screw was too small, they were thrown away. And if they were too big, then she could file them to the actual size supposed to be.

One day we heard our mom fainted. It turned out that she pressed her screw too hard to the filing stone and the stone exploded. She got so scared that she fainted. Then they took her to headquarters and explained to her that you can't press the screw so hard to the filing stone because it's very hard to get a new one. To order one takes time and until then the crates with the other screws will stand in the doorway and can't be sent out to the airplane. So she got an idea that maybe she can be helpful a little bit and do this several times, that the crate shouldn't get to the airplanes. She called [Indiscernible]. She kept on doing it. The stone exploded. She fainted. And we waited for weeks to get a new stone in and get the crates out.

My sister and I didn't know about this. We found out only after the liberation. Nobody knew she was very scared that it would be discovered.

The work there was very, very hard because it was at night. We worked from 7:00 in the evening until 7:00 in the morning. It was impossible to stay alive -- well, awake. The monophone humming, machines, 2:00, 4:00 in the morning. Everybody was almost falling asleep already. It was very hard to do this work for so long, for so many nights.
>> Alesia Fishman: So finally, in February 1945, you were sent out of the factory of Calw on a forced march. Tell us about that and what you thought was going to happen to you.

>> Agi Geva: Actually, we were told one day just to stand at the door and be ready to leave. We thought it was meant, to be ready to leave, waiting for transportation to the wagons and traveling somewhere. We were not that scared anymore because we knew that the allies were already nearing. We knew somehow. We were not supposed to know anything. We were not supposed to be shown. That's why we worked at night. They didn't want the villagers and the town people to know that there are prisoners, Jews, in that factory. The Germans were successful. Nobody ever saw us.

And when we went to the door to wait for transportation, it was night, of course. It was dark outside. They didn't mention we were supposed to walk. They told us there is no transportation, just start walking. It was impossible to imagine that in this cold German winter -- you know, we had one piece of clothes, one shoe, it wasn't a shoe anymore even, without underwear, without gloves, without scarves, without anything, just walk. But we had to. And it was mostly at night. And until the mornings they looked for a barn for us to sleep in. They told us to look for food in the barn. So what did we find? Raw potatoes, raw cabbage. I can't tell you how hungry we were and how weak we were and how desperate we were.

>> Alesia Fishman: So you were walking, more or less, towards a train station where the guards are supposed to be re-armed with guns. And when you got to the station, what happened?

>> Agi Geva: First of all, we were walking 400 kilometers. We were supposed to arrive to Mauthausen but we didn't make anymore. We were told to walk quicker because if we wanted to continue by train, we have to catch a train and we should be able to get there on time. If we couldn't, of course, nobody could walk anymore, nobody was strong enough to walk quickly if happy to walk at all. Most of us couldn't walk anymore even, including I.

We didn't know how lucky we were also here; that on other Death Marches when someone couldn't walk, they simply sat down at the side of the road and they were shot and left there. And at least our guys didn't do that. They helped us to walk.

Actually, we found out that these trains that we were supposed to reach, they were bringing ammunition and guns to execute us. Now, some of us believed this. We didn't know what to believe anymore but we had so little strength. I personally didn't care. Execution, no execution, I can't walk anymore. I just couldn't. And just the despair, the hunger, the cold. It was so cold and windy. It was so hopeless, everything.

Somehow we got to the railway station. And the train was not there anymore. They were gone. So our guard told us -- the guards were four German soldiers and two officers, one of them a woman. They told us just go back to the forest and keep walking. That was really the worst of the worst in my whole life. I could hardly get to the railway station. And then to be told that you won't go on the trains and you won't -- I wouldn't say they told us we wouldn't be executed but we're not supposed to know it and just overheard the German guard. But it came out to be true.

I just didn't know how I got back to the forest and all of this hopelessness and cold, to go through it again. And then suddenly we looked around and there were no guards around us. It was unbelievable. We started to whisper of what can be, what can be the reason, until one of the kapos told us that from this day, 28th of April 1945, we are free. Until we heard this word, it became the best of the best day of my life. I really thought I would not be free anymore, ever.

>> Alesia Fishman: So what happened then? I think there were 180 Hungarians, 179 Hungarians.

>> Agi Geva: There were 180 Hungarians, 20 Polish people, and 180 Hungarians. Then we found out that we are free. There were 180 opinions.

>> [Laughter]

>> Agi Geva: Telling where we were and what we should do. Everybody had a different idea. Of course we were very happy but still cold, still weak, still hungry. My mother somehow found some 35 women of the same opinion to go out to the same direction that we started out. We were still scared but we were afraid to fall into German hands again or who will be our liberators or who will be the soldiers we are going to find on the way.

And then luckily we heard English speaking, an English-speaking group. We found out they were Americans. And these were the first Americans I ever saw.When they saw us, they thought never

in their life, they saw a bunch of women so ugly, so dirty, so bad, so weak. They just took us to their headquarters and really looked after us. They were very nice.
>> Alesia Fishman: So from there your mother decided that you should go back to Miskolc. What was it like to go back?
>> Agi Geva: My mother decided to go back, actually, because she wanted to know who remained alive from the family. The united restitution offices where the Americans sent us from the headquarters, we stayed eight months. It took my mom eight months to decide what to do. We wanted so much to go to Palestine, to the states maybe, anywhere else but back to Miskolc. She insisted.

So when we went back, our hotel was completely empty, almost. So she couldn't open it and start anew. That's what she wanted to do. After she found out who was alive from the family. She got some help. They went to the neighbors. She found every curtain. She said this is mine, this bed is mine, this carpet is mine. They helped her to refurnish the hotel and start it all over again.

But when I went to school the next time I could, one of the schoolmates asked me, Why did you come back? And the other one asked, We never thought to see you again. So the anti-Semitism was even worse than it was before. So how could I go and sit in the school room and study? I went to the principal. I told him, no way; just let me make the tests twice a year and I'll study at home. That's how I'm going to finish my studies.
>> Alesia Fishman: And from there you went to Israel.
>> Agi Geva: We could sign up as soldier for Palestine to fight for Israel because I was passed 18 already. I did so. And my mother was desperate. She thought, I saved you and I wanted us to stay together and now you want to go and leave me here? But my sister and I, we had to. We just couldn't stay there. They didn't let out older people. They let out only us, the younger ones with the hope that the parents would be able to come -- they would let them come after us. And we had to take this risk. My mom couldn't understand how we could do this to her.

As bad as a felt that time, it was so wonderful later. Six years later they let her come. And every single day she told us thank you that we did this that we left and we could bring her to Israel. My mom remarried. He lost his wife and 6-year-old son in Auschwitz. They met and remarried and came to Israel, to a Kibbutz until my sister is now. She lived to 97 1/2. Now nobody, not one of them, would be alive today if my mom wouldn't have saved us. Today, of course, we are more but that was the thought all the time when we look at this picture.

Here is my mom in her last year, 97 years old. And the next picture will be actually -- ok. And my sister became 75 years old. We went back to Hungary, to the farm where we started out from.
>> Alesia Fishman: I don't know what happened to it.
>> Agi Geva: We took a picture near the fence when we were 5 and 6, and now we were 75 and 76.
>> [Laughter]
>> Agi Geva: There is a picture. We look different.
>> Alesia Fishman: I have it if you want to come see it but it disappeared from the slide show.
>> Agi Geva: And if you have questions, I will be very glad to answer of the deportation, what happened before or after.
>> Alesia Fishman: Ok. So try to make your questions as brief as possible. I believe we have people with microphones coming down. So if you want to raise your hand.

I think there's a gentleman in the back there waving his hand.
>> Agi Geva: You might have to repeat.
>> You mentioned earlier a person called a kapos. Could you translate that, what is a kapos?
>> Agi Geva: Yes. There were among Polish prisoners chosen kapos. Kapos meant Commandant, actually, or [inaudible] meant that they were responsible for the same barracks. There were 250 people in the barracks and somebody had to be responsible. They would also, Polish prisoners, because they spoke fluently German. They were already four, five years in the camps when we arrived, the Hungarian group. They called kapos and [Indiscernible]. It just means that they were responsible. People's elders, not necessarily in age.

Does this answer your question?

>> Yes, thank you.
>> Alesia Fishman: Anybody else?
>> Yes, ma'am. I wanted to know, do you hold any bitterness or hatred towards the German people?
>> Agi Geva: German people meaning German people. Maybe third, almost four generations since then so whom am I supposed to hate, actually? These are not the same people who did all there have to us.

Is that what you meant?

My sister, for instance, she doesn't speak German. She spoke German. She wouldn't speak German for anything. She just can't bring herself -- or to buy anything that's German-made. Many people came to this conclusion. They wouldn't buy a German. They wouldn't speak the language. I do like to speak the German language and I look at it in a different way.
>> Alesia Fishman: One in the middle and the back.
>> You seem so articulate and educated. I was just wondering, did you complete your education or go on to college?
>> Agi Geva: I finished my education in Hungary with matriculation. It was the minimum that could be done there. When I came to Israel, there was a program -- because I spoke German and Hungarian but nobody -- and English. Nobody in Israel wanted to hear anyone talk English or German. Hungarian nobody understood. So I had a problem. So somehow it stuck there until I couldn't go on. Until I learned Hebrew, I was already married and had children and went in a different direction.
>> You said you signed up for the military for Israel after you got back to your hometown. What sort of duties did you do in the military?
>> Agi Geva: Well, I signed up but they stopped the group in Marseille. We couldn't get to Palestine before Israel became Israel. And when we got to Israel, then the Army for women wasn't like today, automatic and obliged to serve for two years, the boys three years. I had to wait until there was a group big enough to go to the Army but I married before so I never got to the Army. But my daughter, my son-in-law, my son, everybody were in the Army for a long time.
>> Alesia Fishman: Yes?
>> All of these things you described are incredibly difficult. What kept you going? Was it faith? Was it something like maybe one day you would be free? What was it that kept you going on days that were very difficult?
>> Agi Geva: Only my mother and my sister. I didn't dare to show them that I was so desperate and I didn't dare to tell them that I thought that I will never, ever be free again and go to school again and have a normal meal again, just to be living a normal life again. So I didn't tell them how desperate I was. And I tried not to cry in front of them.

I suppose my sister had similar thoughts but it was mostly for my mom and my sister and, of course, faith. Also.
>> Alesia Fishman: This gentleman in the white shirt.
>> Other than everything, were there any foods that you missed the most like as a child or when you were imprisoned that you missed, like your mother's cooking the most, any dishes from home back in your homeland the most, anything specific?
>> Agi Geva: The most -- a small story. But I missed most was freedom to do what I wanted to do. And until today there isn't a single morning that I shouldn't say a silent prayer of thanks to be free. That's what I missed most. But when the soldiers, Americans, took us to their headquarters, they went out shopping one day and they asked something of us, what would we like. They wanted to give us something. And everybody asked -- not everybody. Some people asked for cookie, some people asked for Schnitzel, sweater, chocolate. And I asked for lipstick.
>> [Laughter]
>> Agi Geva: That's -- I thought that it might make look better, happier. I don't know. And they brought me.
>> [Laughter]
>> Agi Geva: Answer your question?

>> [Laughter]
>> Alesia Fishman: There's someone all the way in the back.
>> I wanted to know, were there any things you learned from your sister or your mother about their experience only after leaving Auschwitz that you were able to sort of talk about and that you learned about your experiences that you weren't able to discuss, trying to be so strong in the midst of it all?
>> Agi Geva: Yes. That's a very, very popular question. They never wanted to talk about it anymore. My sister until today will never mention, never answer a question. My mother didn't want to hear about it. You surely heard about the 50th Sirens that happened the war immediately. Didn't want to take part in it. I so much wanted to know her point of view and her attitude and her ideas. She told you are free. Never think back anymore. We have been through hell. We are free. We don't talk about it anymore. We don't think about it anymore. And for a while I believed maybe that's right but then I thought it's not.

With them I couldn't discuss it anymore. But then I thought that somebody has to talk about it. And when I heard that there are people who don't even believe that it happened, and are doubtful and feel it was propaganda and it never really happened, I started to talk in schools, and wherever I found it important, wherever I was asked to talk.

And when I came to the states, I volunteered the first week in this museum. And I was sent out to many, many places, universities, colleges, schools to tell the story. But my mother and sister, they didn't want to share it. They couldn't.
>> Alesia Fishman: I think we have time for one more question. Someone's pointing over here. Ok. Right here. Young man.
>> How old were you when you were freed?
>> Agi Geva: How old when it started?
>> Alesia Fishman: When you were freed.
>> Agi Geva: When I was freed. It was a year after. I was 15. And the happiest person in the world.
>> Alesia Fishman: Ok. Thank you all very much.

I'm going to turn -- she'll stay around afterwards to answer some questions. I'm going to turn back to Agi in a moment to close our program. But I'd like to thank all of you for being here very much. I hope you can come back. It's our final week, actually, of the *First Person* -- sorry. Our final week of the *First Person* season is next week. Then you can look for the program in 2017.

It's our tradition at *First Person* that our First Person has the last word. But before we turn back to Agi, for those who didn't get a chance to ask her a question during our Q&A period, she will come to the back of the theater so you can feel free to ask a question, shake her hand, or get your photo taken with her. She also is willing and happy to show you the tattoo that is on her arm. She will come to the back of the theater.

With that I will turn back to Agi for the last word.
>> Agi Geva: I thank you for being such good listeners. Really, you give me so much sympathy and courage that I should be able to talk and able to tell the story without a single disturbance. So really thank you.

I have to tell you that it's not exactly how it happened. It was so much worse. There was so much cruelty and atrocities around me. If I would tell you exactly how it happened and would mention all of those horrible things, I wouldn't be able to keep on talking about it. So just that you should know it wasn't exactly that way.
>> Alesia Fishman: Thank you, Agi.
>> [Applause]