REALTIME FILE

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
FIRST PERSON: CONVERSATIONS WITH HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS
FIRST PERSON HALINA PEABODY
APRIL 18, 2018

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>> Betsy Anthony: Welcome to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. My name is Betsy Anthony, a historian on staff here at the museum. I'll be your host today for our program, *First Person*. Thank you for joining us. We are in our 19th year of the *First Person* program. Our First Person today is Halina Yasharoff Peabody whom we shall meet shortly.

This 2018 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. Today's program is being livestreamed, along with the rest of our programs in April and through May 10. Check out the Museum's website for more details.

Halina 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 Halina a few questions. If for some reason we do not

get to your question today, please join us in our online conversation: *Never Stop Asking Why.* The conversation aims to inspire individuals and new generations to ask the important questions that Holocaust history raises, and what this history means for societies today. To join the *Never Stop Asking Why* conversation, you can ask the question and tag the museum on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram using @holocaustmuseum and #AskWhy. You can find the hashtag on the back of your program today, as well.

With that, let's move on to our first person Halina Peabody. We've prepared a brief slide presentation to hep with the introduction.

This is a map of Europe and detail map of Poland. Halina was born in Krakow on December 12, 1932. She was the daughter of Ignacy and Olga Litman.

This photograph features Halina Litman (the circle is on Halina), her mother and her Aunt Irka in 1938.

Halina, her mother and sister survived the war in Jaroslaw under false papers identifying the family as Catholics. On the way to Jaroslaw, the family ran into a Polish man who threatened to reveal their identity. Halina's mother struck a bargain with the man using their tickets for the luggage, all the money she had, and the coats they were wearing in this picture.

This is the house where Halina and her family stayed in Jaroslaw.

In this photograph, Halina and her sister, Eva, celebrate Christmas in hiding.

Halina's mother decided the safest place for her to hide was "in plain sight." She found a job at a German headquarters peeling potatoes for the German troops. This is a photograph of the German headquarters where Olga Litman worked. Olga is in the middle.

After the war, Halina and her family immigrated to England. Halina later lived in Israel and then moved to the United States. This was very fortunate for us as Halina is part of our volunteer corps here at the museum. And I know firsthand just how valuable she is as she used to volunteer in my office years ago.

It is truly my pleasure to introduce my friend, Halina Peabody. Please join me in welcoming Halina to the stage.

>> [Applause]

>> Betsy Anthony: Maybe we could start by you explaining more about your childhood, before the war.

>> Halina Peabody: Yes, even though I was born in Krakow, we lived in a place, Zaleszczyki. It was very much closer to Romania, all the way down. We had a wonderful little town, Zaleszczyki, which was completely surrounded by water. And my mother was very happy about that because she could go water-skiing, swimming, boating. I had a little paddle which I used with her. We used to spend a lot of time on the beach because the weather in Zaleszczyki was very hot in the summer, very cold in the winter. My mother taught me to skate when I was 5. She was in every sport imaginable. She was a also a wonderful knitter. Everything was knitted by her. [Inaudible]

At 6 1/2, September, the war broke out. We knew that the Russians were coming and were going to take over that part of Poland. I was 6 1/2, so the political part I didn't know about. But I did know that the other part of Poland was going to be overrun by the Germans and that that meant that my grandparents, my aunts and uncles were all over there and we were in the Russian part.

Because the Russians were coming, the men were very worried because in the previous First World War, the men were conscripted into the Russian Army which meant 20

years hard labor. They wouldn't let them out. They had to stay in the Army. So the men particularly were very concerned. And without much planning or thinking, a lot of them just decided to go over to Romania. We had a nice bridge going over there. And Romania was not going to be taken over so my father went along with the others. Some people took their families with us but my father was afraid to take us because we had my baby sister, just 2 months old. So we remained. My father went over.

The Russians took over that part of Poland. They pilfered. They did bad things. But as I said, I was a child, so I wasn't told much. All I know is quietly we just stayed at home. We awaited some news. We didn't know what was going to happen. We had no idea what was going on.

But in the meantime as it got colder and everything froze over, the people who ran away so quickly without thinking much or planning decided that maybe they should come back. [Inaudible] my father and the others would creep over the frozen river. Unfortunately the Russians had sealed the border. They caught them all and they put them in prison. They accused them of being spies and put them on trial. My father got 20 years hard labor. He was sent to Russia, to Siberia. So we lost him again.

We remained at home. The Russians had a law that if one person in the family was a criminal, my father, the "dentist" -- he was a criminal because [Inaudible]. The family had to be taken to Siberia as well. So we were all ready to be picked up. [Inaudible: Volume low] We wondered what was happening but we couldn't stay until the house. It was too much to have a house. So they threw us out. They threw us out to a little town just up the road, Tluste. That's where we spent the rest of the Russian occupation, which was about a year and a half or so.

My mother did manage -- after one year there was some communication with my father so she knew where he was. And they had a couple of communications. Then one afternoon, one evening, the Russians disappeared. We were told they left and the Germans were coming. So we went back to the house and waited for the Germans to come to occupy.

>> Betsy Anthony: When you heard that the Germans were coming, do you know that your mother had an impression of how that might be different? Did she think it might be better or worse?

>> Halina Peabody: Well, all we knew is that we could go back to our home. And we did not know anything at all about what the Germans were about, absolutely nothing. We just waited in fear and were worried what the next occupiers would do.

>> Betsy Anthony: So how was that?

>> Halina Peabody: They arrived, lots of noises, came on motorcycles, black uniforms, tall, black boots, shiny. Watching them come down the road was very frightening. And as I said, nobody knew what to expect. We were all ready to cooperate, to live in peace.

They started with very strict rules, particularly for the Jews. First of all, no schools for Jewish children. I was lucky because my father had taught me to read before the war because he wanted me to know how to read when I went into kindergarten. I was to be a very clever girl. I was supposed to read the newspaper. I don't remember any of it. My mother told me. But it wasn't easy. I have no memory. All I know is I've all my life known how to read Polish, to this day.

>> Betsy Anthony: Because of him.

>> Halina Peabody: Yes. So she kept up my skills as best she could looking after my sister and we waited to see.

The other thing they had very strict rules was the curfew. We had very strict food ration, very little food. And the Jewish rations were much smaller than the others. We had yellow stars on the houses and yellow stars on the arms if we were out.

Every Jewish person was supposed -- had to work for the Germans. So everybody got a job. My mother -- they had a list of the Jewish community. They knew my mother could knit very well so they gave her the job of knitting for the mayor, who was obviously German. He had lots of children. My mother was told she would be knitting for the mayor's children.

Everybody cooperated. They gave various jobs to people. As I said, everybody had to be working. If there wasn't a job, they made them clean the sidewalks. What there was, they created a sort of committee, a committee of the Jewish leaders in the community there. They demanded various groups of people for various jobs. They didn't want to have the trouble to looking for people so they would just demand a group of people for jobs to be taken in the morning and they would bring them back in the afternoon. So that went on for a little while. Everybody, as I said, was very cooperative.

Then they decided there was a very big job to be done. As I said, the weather was very, very harsh in the winter. So they said that they needed the people to come and help bind trunks of trees for the winter. Just up the road was an old military camp, young trees. So they wouldn't freeze, you had to bind the trunks for the winter with burlap.

So they collected all the people in the square and they were walking them up the road up to that camp. A lot of young people actually came along willingly just to be able -- just to help. And as usual, we waited for them to come back. Nobody was coming back. So all day and afternoon, evening, nobody was coming back. We didn't know what was happening. Everybody got very anxious, didn't know what to think.

Later on in the evening, one man managed to get himself back. He had been shot. He was shot. They missed his heart and they shot him in the arm. He told us what actually happened. Well, when they got to the forest, they found there was an open grave with planks. They were told to undress, lay on the planks, and they were shot. And as they were shot, they dropped into the grave.

Now, this man was one of the last ones. So as I said, they missed his heart and he was lying on top of the grave. They didn't cover them very well. They didn't care much. And he managed to drag himself out and came back and told us the story.

And at this point everybody realized what the plan was. And the first thing everybody did was to start looking for hiding places. The next time, you know, when they were going to ask for a group of people, everybody was going to scatter. When they did come with the request this time, they said it was going to be working in Germany. And that was common for the Polish people. They always needed workers. But nobody believed them anymore. So everybody scattered.

My mother took my sister and me to a lady who used to cook for us. We stayed with her the whole day. But we knew this was not the end. They managed to find the group of people that they needed. They always had numbers. Germans liked numbers. So they loaded them on the train and then took them away never to be heard from again.

We were just so, so anxious. My mother didn't know what to do, two children and nowhere to hide, nowhere to go. A lot of talk about trying to get over to the river, over to Romania. We worried they would continue that. But in the end they were too clever. They decided instead of trying to find us again -- because [Inaudible]. Instead of looking for us, they threw the rest of us out of the town altogether and told us to go the same place we were during

the Russian occupation, Tluste.

So everybody took whatever they could and we went over to Tluste. We were told go to go into a certain area, sort of communal homes. We were told that this was going to be the area we were supposed to be in. We were not allowed to go anywhere else. It became a ghetto afterwards but at that point we just got a certain area where we were supposed to be. And again, more rations, no school. The first thing we started looking for was another hiding place. And my mother said to me, you know, we're not going to work because they're going to do it again, kill as many as they can.

In fact, they didn't do that exactly but they did demand again a group of people to go work in Germany again. My mother took us to a couple of farmers. You see, she knew some people there because we had been there before. So she split us up. She gave me to one farmer and she herself went to another farmer with my sister.

They were looking for people to take away. All day long I was waiting and thinking, you know, my mother was caught. The woman who had me kept telling me who was found in the square, to find them and put people in the square until they had the right number. I kept asking her, "My mother?" "No, not your mother but" this person. I knew everybody, of course. My mother was not apparently caught. After a whole day of this, I waited and my mother did come to get me. The first thing she said is, you know, I thought you were caught; we are never going to split up again; whatever happens, the three of us will go together.

We went back to our place and again started thinking what could be done. What could she do? There's nothing to be done. There's two kids and didn't know what to do. Then they came up with this idea that we were three females so they couldn't check. And she thought maybe because we didn't look Jewish, maybe we could get away with pretending to be Catholic. And maybe we could survive that way.

So they went to a priest in Tluste and they managed to obtain -- they had to pay for the papers but they obtained new IDs for us. Now, to this day I don't know if those papers were real or not, if they were genuine, but that's what we could get. My mother sat me down and told me that my new name, my new grandparents, my new birthplace. I came from Krakow. And my sister was too young, of course, so we didn't say anything to her.

And my mother chose a town. We were going to go away, Jaroslaw. Jaroslaw was about half way down to Krakow. There was no particular reason. Didn't know the town. But a friend was very good to us and they helped my mother and they collected a little money for us because we had none. They put us on the train to go to Jaroslaw.

>> Betsy Anthony: Your friend, were they Jewish friends in the ghetto there, too? They were all coming together to support you three and put you on your way?

>> Halina Peabody: Yes.

>> Betsy Anthony: That's incredible. Sorry. I didn't want to ruin your flow.

>> Halina Peabody: They did not survive, by the way.

>> Betsy Anthony: They really sacrificed their lives.

>> Halina Peabody: They were wonderful to us.

So we were supposed to be on the train for four days and four nights. We said goodbye. And all we had left in the world, of course, was one or two suitcases of clothing and the little money they collected for us.

As we started on the travel, there was a young man who attached himself to us and started chatting as they usually do on the train, sat down and would start talking if you're in the same place. My mother was talking very nicely with him. I didn't pay it much attention. But then

she said to me, you know, you ask many, many questions. And they were very hard and they finally pushed me so hard that I could not withstand it and I admitted that we were actually Jewish. Because they were asking maybe grandparents, maybe some uncle or something. It was enough of the Germans, you know. But she just told him straight out that we were actually Jewish. So he said to her, I'm going to Jaroslaw as well so I am going to take care of you. I'm going to watch you and travel with you to Jaroslaw and when we get to Jaroslaw, I will have to hand you over to the Gestapo.

Now, my mother knew what that meant, particularly that the children would not survive because children would be killed. She might have been able to survive as a worker because they kept adults for work but she did not want to survive. She told me, "I don't want to survive without the kids."

So we started traveling. My mother thinking as much as she could. We talked a little bit and she said there's really nothing that we can do. She said -- in the end she said she came to one conclusion. She had this one resolution that she thought would be the easiest. She explained to me that she offered to give him the tickets, the suitcases, and the little money she had and even the coats on our back and she said all she wanted him to do was when he gave us up to the Gestapo to have us shot quickly, immediately, because she felt this would be the least suffering for us. They do it fast. [Inaudible: Volume low]

So we continued traveling like that. You can imagine four days and four nights on the train. The trains are not very modern. We were all exhausted, full of lice. Our hair, clothes, everything, full of lice. We were very tired. We weren't thinking -- at least I wasn't. When we finally arrived, as we were coming down to the platform I suddenly woke up. I started pulling at my mother. And I said, "Mom, I don't want to die." She looked at me and looked at him. We were walking towards the Gestapo. She said to him, you know, maybe you can let her go. She's blond and green-eyed, maybe she can survive. I said, "No, I'm not going without you."

So we continued our walk to the Gestapo. Then she asked him if he had children of his own. He said he did. So she said, "Look, I've given you everything I have. Keep it. But why don't you let us go and try our luck? Why do you want us on your conscience?" I think that's what actually did it. He stopped and he said, "You don't have a chance" but he left us. He took everything and went.

So now the three of us, homeless --

>> Betsy Anthony: What do you do?

>> Halina Peabody: What we did? Well, my mother was always thinking. So she looked around. There was a little street, the main street actually, of that little town. And she saw a little cafe. So we walked into the cafe. She asked for a little milk for my sister. And she started asking people there if there was anybody who knew anyplace where we could find lodging. It was very important not to be on the street because there were German soldiers with guns drawn walking around and they would probably ask for the papers, but the papers we were not sure so my mother was very anxious.

So somebody in the place knew somebody so they said they would take us to a place not too far away. It was a woman who took lodgers. So said he would walk us over, which he did. We walked and there was this very nice lady, very sweet lady there. She looked at us, my mother carrying my sister and me by the hand, and she said, "Ok, I'll take you." My mother told her we had no money. She was going to go to work the next day and would bring everything to her for keeping us. And she had strapping sons. They said, "Don't take her mom, don't take her." And she says, "Oh, no. This is a mother and two children, I have to take her."

Said this was the most Christian thing. And she took us.

My mother, the next day, went to work, as she said. She started little jobs, whatever she could earn she brought back. My sister was not very well but she kept her. And I, as a Polish child, had to go to school for two hours a day. I was very anxious about going to church because I didn't know anything about the Catholic religion, didn't know anything about my own but less about the Catholic. All I knew was to cross myself going in and out of church.

So I went to school and the first thing I learned was one hour was for religion and one hour was for general studies, whichever. The children aren't very educated. Obviously during the war there wasn't much school. But I was glad that there was a religion class because as I said, I was hoping to learn. And sure enough they taught the Catholic religion, catechism. There was a little booklet. You had questions and answers. And I got ahold of that booklet and I was able to read it from top to bottom and side to side and I got some idea, you know, about what the religion is about. So I was feeling much better about it. Because you know, every family went to church. And the lady who looked after us was very keen on me [Inaudible] which I gave her all the credit for.

>> Betsy Anthony: Your father teaching you to read at such a young age really paid off. It was really helpful to you.

>> Halina Peabody: Absolutely.

I'm losing my voice. Not good.

So I learned as much as I could from that. I went to communion, went at some point to communion. And my mother went from work to job to job finding various things. She was very worried about security. And particularly she was worried about my sister, not only that she was not well but she had very curly hair and the Polish girls at that time, very little, there were very few -- Polish, Ukrainian, they all had straight, blond hair. Mine was blond and wavy so they braided it but hers was like an afro. So she was terribly worried somebody would point. Point and that was enough. So she shaved my sister.

>> Betsy Anthony: Shaved it all off. How old was she at that time?

>> Halina Peabody: She was about 2 1/2. Very, very young. So that was one thing she did. Then she was thinking, you know, the Polish people are very good at recognizing Jews so she was worried about that. So she offered herself for a job in Germany. The Polish people, a lot of Polish people, did that and that was ok because Polish people were supposed to be the slave laborers. So they could go and work and earn money, I guess. So my mother thought it would be safer if she went to Germany for work. But they didn't take her because my sister was too young. So that didn't work out.

>> Betsy Anthony: I think it's a good idea but very brave. As we said earlier, your mother was so brave, had such foresight.

>> Halina Peabody: She even thought of putting my sister up for adoption for a moment. But it was only for a moment.

>> Betsy Anthony: But in that situation, I guess she had to think of everything, consider everything.

>> Halina Peabody: Everything, yeah.

So in the meantime, we got one letter from the people we left behind. They must have written to them because they knew where we were. They said in the letter that my father had sent a letter through the Red Cross that he was in Palestine with his sister. We knew his sister went out with the children in 1932 and went to work the land in Palestine in those days. We never met that part of the family but we knew that if they were in Palestine, he was out of

Russia and was not a prisoner anymore. We couldn't do anything about it because obviously we couldn't contact him but we at least had this good news that he was not a prisoner anymore.

Then my mother decided what she needed was an ID card working for the Germans. It was very important. The Germans stopped you, and you had papers if you were working for the Germans. For the Polish people, that is, that was ok. So that's when she decided to apply for this job in the German military camp. It was risky, again, because they asked for papers. There were no computers in those days so it wasn't as easy to click and find out but still, it took weeks. And we didn't know whether we were going to be taken out and arrested immediately or not. But in the end the job came through and she got a big job which was peeling potatoes for the troops.

>> Betsy Anthony: The additional worker ID was additional protection.

>> Halina Peabody: Exactly. And sure enough, not very long afterwards we suddenly got a raid from the Germans overnight. They came with guns drawn in the middle of the night, everybody out. So we came out. My mother got up. Showed the ID card. And they said, "No, no. You stay." So we stayed. They took the rest of the people there to the station to be checked out. They all came back the next morning because they were all working but we were spared.

>> Betsy Anthony: Because of that.

>> Halina Peabody: Because of our special card.

>> Betsy Anthony: So the only Jews.

>> Halina Peabody: That he was.

>> Betsy Anthony: Very brave.

>> Halina Peabody: In the meantime, food was very, very rare. We kids used to try and steal as much as we could. Somebody asked me what was my hobbies. I said stealing food. That was my hobby. And we used to go to [Inaudible] in the summer, used to grab some fruit. Mainly the food we took from the farmers. The farmers had to bring certain contingents in and had to weigh them in. They had to bring them to the Germans and they were weighed in and then they had to deliver it to wherever they had to. But in the meantime, if they had been stamped as being ok that they had enough stuff, we could just jump in the back of the carts and grab potatoes, carrots, whatever. We had little food. So we could make soup or something. As I said, we didn't see any meat for years, bread, no bread. So it was just we had barley, for some reason we had barley which was something I didn't like even as a child. There was no obesity at all in those days.

So we had wooden clogs. We used to put old newspapers to keep our feet warm. We had no electricity, no plumbing. We had carbide light. We used to use a little bit at night. We had that. So living was rather rough. Today I don't think we could do it. But all we wanted obviously was to live.

So that went on -- my mother went for quite a while with this German military camp. And one morning we woke up and it was quiet. It was silence on the street, no horse and carts, nothing. My mother was in bed with my sister and I was standing by the window, at the end of the bed. And we were talking. She didn't know whether she should go to work or not. We didn't have any newspapers or radios we had no idea what was going on in the front. Suddenly there was a tremendous bang. Apparently it was a bomb that came down, the only bomb that came down, it was on our house. It split and hit my hand. The shrapnel hit my hand and I started screaming "My hand, my hand."

My mother grabbed me and my sister and we walked out on to the street. My hand

was bleeding badly. She looked around. She was carrying my sister, so we had to walk. There was a hospital not too far away. We walked to the hospital. They picked me up and cleaned me out and told her that the Russians were coming. They told her that my hand might have to be amputated because there was lots of dirt, the way the dirt came down. In the end the nurses were very good. They were still nuns two beautiful nuns. They managed to clean me. They had to use very bad medicine. What was it that you burn?
>> Betsy Anthony: Cauterize?
>> Halina Peabody: Yes, my hand. And my mother ran for miles not to hear me scream. And the nun would say to me, just put your face in my habit and scream. And I did that. But they saved my hand. So I lost a finger. That was that.

My mother in the meantime immediately started thinking, you know, to find my father. She knew he didn't know where we were. So everybody started looking for people. So she knitted a little bit to earn some money. And then she started putting out announcements.

Now, she knew -- Palestine [Inaudible] so she put out various announcements after she spent one night with me and my sister in the hospital she went back to the place we lived and it was completely ruined. There was nothing there, nothing, nothing to save. So the neighbor took her. We found out that in the kitchen, the roof fell down. I was next door, in the bedroom, and the kitchen fell down. And unfortunately, sadly, the lady who took us in was killed.

So my mother went back and forth to the hospital to me. In the meantime, the doctor diagnosed her with cancer, breast cancer.
>> Betsy Anthony: While you were in the hospital she was diagnosed?
>> Halina Peabody: Yeah.
>> Betsy Anthony: Oh, my.
>> Halina Peabody: So they suggested she had the operation because they didn't want us to be orphaned. So she did. The lady next door took care of my sister in the meantime.

I wanted to say my real name in the hospital but my mother said that I couldn't because there was a Pogrom and the few Jewish people that came out of hiding were killed. Now, I know not all the Pols are bad and there were ones that helped but still that was the fact. So I had to keep pretending to be under the false name until we got to Krakow.

How are we doing for time?
>> Betsy Anthony: A little bit more time.
>> Halina Peabody: So my father was found. My father sent my cousin from Palestine. Because he was in the British Army, had the uniform. So times were so mixed. The Russians were coming. Everything was a mess. People could move around. So he came and he had no problem, you know, crossing the borders or anything. He came and he put us in touch with a Jewish agency in Krakow. So we had to make our way to Krakow.

Then we were in a kind of communal home. And from there they took us to [Inaudible] from there they took us over to Germany, the frontier. There was a Polish and a Russian guard there. The Polish guard was fine. But the Russian guard was not satisfied. So he insisted on [Inaudible]. He wanted a watch. So nobody moved until my mother moved. My mother gave her watch. Then some other people [Inaudible: Volume low] The Russians had a jacket full of watches. They loved watches.

So once we were over the border into Germany, we had to make our way to Berlin and we had to buy tickets. You wouldn't believe it but the Germans refused to sell us tickets because we were Jews. By then we were under the auspices of the Jewish agency so I don't

know how they bought them anyway but I never forgot that.
>> Betsy Anthony: Before you go any further, from Germany, I recall part of what you explained, talking about anti-Semitism, your sister's reaction to learning that she was Jewish was peculiar.
>> Halina Peabody: Oh, yes. When she saw my cousin, she said to him, "Ari, you're a nice man but you're Jewish." [Laughter] So he said, "Well, yes, but so are you." And she said, "No." She said, "Look at me. Do I have horns? Do I have a tail?" Because that's the way she understood the Jews looked like.
>> Betsy Anthony: Because growing up as a little girl posing as a Polish girl.
>> Halina Peabody: She was not happy.
>> Betsy Anthony: It took her a while.
>> Halina Peabody: It took her a while. [Laughter] Yes. She was very young. She was 5. They used to apparently ask her -- in the garden, you can tell us now, right, you're Jewish. No. No, of course not.
>> Betsy Anthony: But that was part of your mom's strategy to keep her innocent of what was going on so it worked.

So we have a few more minutes. Back to Germany and then where?
>> Halina Peabody: So we went through German -- Berlin, various parts. Berlin was divided up. So we went to the French zone. We got wonderful cheese. And then we went to the English and bread. I had not seen that for a long time. I know I was delighted.

We did not manage to catch up with my father for a couple of months. We ended up in a DP camp in Italy. My father, it turned out, to have been in the Army. What happened was they had a nice meeting, Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt, and Stalin agreed to let some people out, political prisoners, because they needed boots on the ground to fight Hitler. They were not doing well. So they decided to let people out. That's how my father came out.

So there was a General Anders, also a political prisoner. He was asked to create a unit of soldiers there and my father was one of them. Anders was so nice because he said I'm not only going to take the men, I'm going to take families as well. And they let him do that. So my aunt and uncle and cousin came out as well. They were in Siberia.

And my father then was stationed actually in a Polish unit which was part of the British Army in Egypt. So he would spend weekends with his sister in Tel Aviv. But we didn't know any of that. But because he was part of the British Army they had a choice of where to go. Didn't have to wait to get anywhere. But they said either Palestine or England and my parents chose England. So that's why I ended up going to England.

England was very, very cold and rainy, very miserable. They had fought so hard. They were drained but they were very nice. They were fair. The rations, we had the rations that they did. But it was not an easy life there but, of course we were free. Learned the language there. And eventually we moved to London and everybody bought a house because we were homeless for long and all we wanted was a place of our own. I went to school and they told me just to get on with it, learn the language. I read a lot of Polish books and knitted a lot. But eventually the teacher would say to me, well, do your best, do your best.
>> Betsy Anthony: And you found a hobby that you have.
>> Halina Peabody: Better than the one in the war, yes. Because I was a little frustrated not knowing the language, didn't know the culture, so I wanted to play tennis but unfortunately there was no facilities. So I took up table tennis. And table tennis -- there were tables everywhere, in school, in college. I found a youth club where we bought the house also had

table tennis. And so I played table tennis and it gave me a lot of pleasure, a lot of exercise.

Eventually when Israel was created, I was able to go to Israel representing England in table tennis. They have what's called the Maccabiah Games every four years, just like the Olympics but they were for Jewish youth from all over the world. It continues today as well. So in 1953 I was sent to represent England in table tennis. And I met my family there for the first time, a couple of friends in Israel. It was the most wonderful trip that I can remember.

I had to go back home because my mother was not well. So I went back and I promised myself that I would go back again. My mother unfortunately got cancer again and passed away 1956. And in 1957, another Maccabiah so I went again. This time I said I would stay a year if I could find a job. Because it was under the British mandate. It wasn't difficult. So I stayed there. And I decided to bring my sister over. She came for a year. She met her future husband there. He was English so that's why she's in London now. I stayed there. I had to find another job because the place I was working for was sold to the Israelis. So I was looking for a job and my job turned out to be in the American Embassy in Tel Aviv. And that's why I ended up eventually in the states.

>> Betsy Anthony: Thank you so much. We have time for a few questions from our audience.

>> Halina Peabody: Yes. Absolutely.

>> Betsy Anthony: After we do questions, please remain seated because Halina will close the program with a few last words.

We have two microphones on stands, one in either aisle here. So please come to the microphone and wait until you're at the microphone to pose your question. It will make it easier for us to hear it. And I'll repeat your question to make sure that Halina hears it. If I can ask questioners to be as brief as they can be, that would be great, too.

Do we have any questions?

>> Hello. Thank you for your story. I was struck when you said that you knew the Russians were going to come and get you -- that you didn't know what it meant that the Germans were coming next, that you hadn't heard -- just in social media now, the way we live, knowing everything before it happens, I was just struck when you said you didn't have the information about what was going to happen. When you heard the Germans were coming, when the Russians left. So were there any newspaper publications about what was going on in other areas or was it just propaganda? Does that make sense?

>> Betsy Anthony: Her question is about the fact that you said when you knew the Germans were coming you didn't quite know what that would mean. So what kind of information did you have or do you know?

>> Halina Peabody: I was about that high.

>> Betsy Anthony: Only 6 years old.

>> Halina Peabody: All I knew is what my mother told me, you know, what was going on. They didn't know anything. There were no papers, no radios. That was a no-no. So we didn't know anything. We had no idea what the plans were, nothing. We just wanted to cooperate and live in peace.

>> Wow. Thank you again for your story.

>> Betsy Anthony: Thank you for your question.

>> Thank you for being here. My question to you is, during your travels, other than the time you had injury to your hand, were you consistently subjected to bombings along the way?

>> Betsy Anthony: She's wondering about bombings. The bomb that fell on your house, was it the only bombing you experienced or were there other times?

>> Halina Peabody: No. That's about it. That was the only bomb. Because we were living in an area where it was a small town and I guess the bombings were in big towns.
>> Ok.
>> Halina Peabody: We had an artillery in the hospital. They were always shooting up there. But we didn't have any other bombs. That was the only bomb that fell on that town at that time. But it was a small town. And the Germans disappeared. So there was not that much to fight about, I expect. I don't know. Very difficult to know what happened.
>> And I have another question -- Oh.
>> Betsy Anthony: Is it a quick one?
>> You said a couple of times that the Germans knew what to look for to find the Jews and the Polish what to look for to find the Jews. What were they looking for?
>> Betsy Anthony: Actually you said -- her mom believed the Pols really knew what to look for to find a Jew and that the Germans less so. But what does that mean? What were they looking for, might they notice, that would indicate you were Jews?
>> Halina Peabody: I honestly don't know. My sister who was 5 years old told my cousin he was Jewish. I mean, how she knew I don't know. The Polish people are very good at recognizing Jews. So we had some characteristics I guess.
>> Oh. Ok. But you don't know what that was.
>> Betsy Anthony: It's confusing.
>> Thank you very much.
>> Betsy Anthony: One last question.
>> Thank you for your beautiful story. I would like to know if you've ever written a memoir, autobiography which could be purchased?
>> Betsy Anthony: Have you written a memoir or biography to purchase?
>> Halina Peabody: No, I have not. In a class here that they have, "Echoes of Memory," I write small pieces. I just don't feel -- I don't know, it's too painful. Particularly because of my mother. It would just be too sad.
>> Thank you.
>> Betsy Anthony: Thank you for your questions.

I'm going to turn back to Halina in a moment to close our program. I'd like to thank all of you for being here today. As I mentioned, our *First Person* program takes place every Wednesday and Thursday until the middle of August. We hope that you can come back.

It's our tradition at *First Person* that our First Person has the last word. But before we turn back to Halina, I want to let you know two things: First, for those who didn't get to ask a question to Halina during the normal program period, she will remain on stage after the program so that you can come down and ask her then or maybe take a photograph; the second thing, and this is important, our photographer, Joel, is here with us in the front row; he's going to come up on stage after Halina finishes her closing remarks and Joel will take a photo of Halina with all of you in the background. It makes for a really great photo. But we have to ask that you stay in your seats. So if you just remember that, I'll turn back to Halina for the last word.
>> Halina Peabody: Yes. That is the most difficult part. Bear witness to what happened to me because a lot of people still don't think that it really happened. I think it's so important to learn from history which we hope will never repeat itself. I feel like there is a saying in Hebrew which means repairing the world. I think we all have to work for that. And I'm hoping that it will never happen again. But as I said, it takes hard work and cooperation. We should all help each other

and do the best we can for each other. And I think that the world will become better.

Thank you so much for listening.

>> [Applause]