

Mala Weintraub Dorfman Interview

Could you tell me your name please and where you're from?

I am... My name is Mala Dorfman, Weintraub Dorfman, and I'm from Łódź.

And during the war, can you just tell me the name of the places that you were at?

In the war I was in Kozienice Ghetto and Skarzysko and Skochiski, in a camp and then I went to uh, my God, Skarzysko...

Skarzysko.

and then to Częstochowa. I was liberated in Częstochowa.

So they... You were, you were in labor camps.

Labor camps, yes, I was.

Tell me a little about your life before the war in Łódź.

We were a family of... We were six children and my parents. We had an Orthodox home. We were not wealthy but we were comfortable. And, uh...

What did your father do?

He was in scrap business. Scrap, iron, glass, stuff like that. And...

Tell me your parents' name.

My mother's name was Esther, my father's name was Joel.

And her maiden name?

Riapel, and my, my mother's name is Riapel, maiden name.

And, and your brothers and sisters?

Uh, my brother, one was Menasha, one was Bailish, and my sister was Mendel, the one that perished. And Franka and Rosa and I that was survived.

And Franka was the eldest?

Franka was the oldest, Rosa is the uh, second...

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You were three.

and I'm the third.

You went to school.

Yes, I did.

Polish school?

I went to, to a Jew... To a school yeah, and then I went to Basiaka in the evening.

So cheder.

Basiaka, whatever. Cheder's for men, Basiaka was for the girls.

For the girls, okay. So it's, that's a long day.

Yes, it was.

Public school in the day.

Yes, it was.

What did you speak at home?

Is... At home, on the beginning when I was young we spoke German and we lived in a German neighborhood. But we start speaking Yiddish and Polish.

So, you lived among Volksdeutsche.

Yes, yes, but we moved away from there because the pogroms started there and all that, so we moved to another neighborhood.

Um, what, what was a typical day in, in school like? I mean, would, you would...

We went to school, was uh, probably about, I don't remember exactly, I think eight o'clock. And uh, we had different subjects we learned and the respect for the teacher, we was petrified of them. We were scared, so we were sitting and listening and answering when we were asked to answer. And uh, 'til one o'clock

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we went to school. Then I came home, we had dinner. We had received a mea... a main meal during the day. And then I went to Basiaka and there we were two hours, two and a half hours. I learned how to daven and stuff like that.

And what were the, what was a Friday night like?

Friday night was... We all had to be home. Uh, my mother lit the candles, my father made Kiddish, and uh, we sang the songs, whatever...

Smirov?

I can't remember. Yeah, I can't remember anymore. And uh, we had a Friday night meal. And we stayed home, we did not go out afterwards. We were all together.

What about during the day? Was there preparation for

Friday?

For Shabbat?

Oh yeah. My mother cooked, my mother baked. We didn't buy challah. She baked her own challah, her own bread. And uh, yeah, she, she cooked, we cleaned 'cause when we came back from school we had to help out and, you know, it depends when the lights, when you had to kindle uh, kindle the lights. So, and it was over. And we sat and we waited for my father and my brothers to come back from shul.

On Friday night.

Oh yeah, they went to shul.

And Saturday would they go again? Would all of you go on Saturday?

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No, we didn't go to shul. Just when it was some ??? you know, something like that, so we went with them. Uh, we didn't go to Shabbas ??? no. My mother went, my father went, but we didn't.

And what about holidays? Say, Pesach?

Pesach? We had our own seder. Everybody had their own seder. All the whole... every family had their own. The only time when we got together was for Purim or Hanukkah. We exchanged gifts and for Purim we went to my grandmother.

Would you dress up at Purim?

Oh yes, yeah. We went to my grandmother and we said, ??? That's what we used to say when we went to our family.

Translate it.

Yeah, and we took Hamentosh over there, you know, stuff like that.

So, you gave each other um, food.

Yes, yes we did.

Hamentosh and things like that.

Yes, yes we did, yeah.

How large was the family with your aunts and uncles and cousins?

Well, we were very close, we were close.

How many aunts and uncles, do you remember?

I, I... In Łódź we had uh, my mother's sister, my mother's brother was there, my father's two brothers were there. The rest of the family was someplace else. Some in Kozenice, someone lives in other towns. But that's what we had in, in town.

And they were all married.

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Beg your pardon?

They were all married?

Oh yes. They were married, they had children. One, my, one of my uncles had eleven kids. Not one of them survived. He survived, but he's not here anymore, he passed away.

So, the children didn't survive.

No, none of them.

So, how many would you say total?

In our family?

Yeah.

He had eleven, my other uncle had seven, so it's eighteen. Eighteen, twenty, Must have, without, with us, must at least about thirty-eight people uh, kids.

Just kids.

Cousins, cousins.

So, we're talking close to fifty, with the...

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

And how many survived? How many of the whole family survived?

Just the three of us and one cousin, my aunt's uh, son. He's here too, Mickey Milberg, I don't know if you know him. And uh, Larry and Jackie and Ruth.

Ruth.

That's what survived.

I, I seem to remember you had uh, a summer cottage that you used to...

We didn't own it, we rented, we rented it.

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During the summer.

Yeah, on the summer. My mother took us out there. And...

And your father would stay in Łódź.

Yes, he would. He would come out on the we... on weekends, he would come out, yeah.

So, what did you do there?

Nothing, we played around. We were young when we are going there. When we're older we didn't go anymore. We played around, I don't know. We went to the, to the lake there and that's what we did. My mother baked and cooked for Shabbas, and there, there was a big oven. I remember she always cooked, baked for us for Shabbas when my father came.

Challah.

Challah, the cakes ???

And during the year, what would you do for fun, just to...

We really didn't do much...

Movies?

because, uh... We went to the, we were going to school and then just before the war we decided, maybe w... my, my father had a certificate to go to Israel, so he want us to learn how to sew. So, we used to go down uh, below us, there was a woman with a sewing machine, so she taught me how to sew on a machine. But the ??? there, ??? to a movie we didn't go. We went to the park, went for a walk, but most time we were around the house, we were playing ball.

Last time we talked, you told me you saw *The Dybbuk*.

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Oh yes, I did see *The Dybbuk*. In fact, she was speaking about it, about *The Dybbuk* when I was there Monday. Yes, I did see it, yeah.

So, that was a Polish movie, well, Yiddish movie.

The Dybbuk. No.

Yeah.

The one that spoke?

No, the, the movie itself.

Yeah, sure, sure, it was in Yiddish. Yeah, *The Dybbuck*, yeah.

So, it must have been a Yiddish...

Yes, it was a Yiddish. I remember it was in... The only time I went to a theater.

No, I shouldn't say. When *Molly Picken* came I saw it too.

In person?

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Wow.

But we didn't go much to, to theater or to a movies, no.

And you had, you lived among, you said, Volksdeutsche, so you lived among non-Jews.

No, then we moved over there, but. Just before the war uh, broke out, we lived someplace else, not with uh, the, the Germans, no, no.

When you were younger, do you remember any incidents of anti-Semitism?

I remember there was a pogrom. This... I was a little girl. That's all I know. My father said, it's a pogrom, we have to move away from here. So, we moved away from there and we went to another part of the city.

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Do you remember Piłsudski?

From school.

Just from school.

Just from school and then he had a monument, Piłsudski. That's all I know about it.

So, do you think maybe after he died things got worse?

I think so, yes it did, yes it did, yes. It got worse.

So, you lived in the, in the center of the city and then you moved.

Where we lived the first time it was in the city, but then we moved opposite way, away from that city.

To a Jewish neighborhood?

It was mostly Jewish. My grandmother, he had a store there, not far from us and all that, but it was more Jewish, yeah.

It wasn't by Bałuty, was it?

Hm?

It wasn't...

No, not Bałuty... No, no, no, no.

That's where the ghetto was.

It was near Gelnef. It was near Platshalera where we moved.

Platshalera.

In a different uh, area.

Central, central square. Is that what Platshalera means?

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Yeah. Central square, right, right, right. Then we moved close by. There we lived until the war broke out.

Do you remember where you were when the war broke out?

I was home. And uh, uh, we looked down the window, I looked out the window and I saw the Germans and I saw the Jews with the payes and the beard and they were cutting off the beard and ripping out the uh, the payes from them. And my mother said no, we have to go away. And they start talking in the city, you go to a small town, you'll be safe, they will not come, just in big cities, so she took us to my grandmother.

In Kozienice.

In Kozienice, yeah, yeah. So my two brothers and my sister and myself. Franka and Rosa stayed with my father and my mother went with us. But she went right back. She didn't stay with us.

She left you with your...

Yeah, over there. When we got in the ghetto we got a little room and we all stayed there. And then...

There was already a ghetto in...

Yes, when I got there, there was a ghetto.

Was the war a surprise to your family?

Very. We were shocked, not a surprise. We were shocked when the war broke out. No one talked about it, no one knew about... The only thing we knew that the German Jews came to Poland. So we knew that something is not going right if the German run away from German, the Germans just run away from Germany.

Did they, they came to Łódź.

They came to Łódź, they came all over, all over.

And did you meet or see any of them?

No, no, but that's what the paper said. You know, we just, what my mother read in the paper. She bought the Jewish news, the Jewish paper so she read about it.

Was there a Zionist movement in the...

If there was, I didn't know.

But your father wanted to go to Isra... to Palestine at the time.

He wanted to go to Palestine, yeah. And we had a certificate, but the war broke out, we couldn't go anymore.

How did you get to Kozenice?

With the wagon, horse and buggy. We put the stuff under, on the, the thing, and I, we sat down on it, and he took, took, took us there, a Polack took us there.

What did you take with you?

The, you know uh, pillows and covers and some towels, whatever we could get on it. Not that much because it wasn't such a big uh, wagon.

And clothes, did you pile clothes on...

We did some clothes. We didn't have that much clothes, but we took the clothes with us, yeah. Whatever we had, we did, could take it.

Did anybody think that it was going to lead to the Holocaust?

No, no, no, no. We just saw what they did, what I saw when they came in. But I didn't expect to be camps and, and uh, and uh, ovens and all that. No, I didn't.

What did you think about the Germans? What did they look like to you?

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I saw 'em before. Didn't... They were just like you and I. They didn't look different. They just had the uniforms on, with the ??? that's what was different.

So, you weren't terrified of them.

Yes, I was.

You were.

Oh yes.

And before they came in, was there, was there artillery? Did you hear guns going off or...

No...

bombs, nothing.

no, no really not.

So, Łódź wasn't bombed that you remember.

No, no, not really, no.

They just appeared.

That's it.

So, when you went to Kozenice, what was it like in the ghetto there?

We had one room for the four of us. And uh, the ghetto was okay. I met people, we went out, we walked, we, you know, we were free... like free in the ghetto.

But we were in a ghetto and we couldn't go out of the ghetto.

Barbed wire?

Beg your pardon?

Was it barbed wire? Was it surrounded by...

Yeah, sure.

And were there Jewish police?

Jewish police were there too, yeah.

And did you work?

When I got to the... When I first... When my brothers, my brothers and my sister, my uncle came to take him to a smaller town, smaller than Kozienice. He said, "No one will touch me." He was a very wealthy man, he had a, a mill, a mill that he was making flour. And he was a wealthy man. He said, "I have everything for them, I have food and everything. Don't worry about... I'll take him." And took him away from them. So I went to, I went and I started to work in a hospital. And uh, I worked there until I went out from the camp, from the ghetto.

What did you do in the hospital?

I was a nurse. First I took some courses there just to know what to do. And uh, what we did, what we did what everything. We had to cha... change the linens, we had to take care of them, and there was the medication to give to them, they gave it to us and I gave the medication. And that's what I did. And sometime I worked during the night and sometime I worked during the day. And that's what I... They paid me. They, the hospital yeah, they paid. What am I going to live from? I was there all the time. So, but not much, but I could get by, you know.

Was there rationing at this point?

Yes, it was, yeah, yeah.

And, and an arm band or yellow star? Was everybody wearing?

No, I don't ??? not yet, no.

Um, did you save anybody's life at the hospital?

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Yes, I did. I, now I didn't save, but I took care of them, our men. And I'll never forget, as long as I'm going to live. I walked in at the nightshift and I walked by the bed and he said, help me, help me. So, I went over and I saw the mess he was laying there. I took him off and I cleaned him up and I changed his bed. And he said to me, one thing I want to tell you, you're going to live through the war and you're going to be okay. And that, it's rings in my ears all the time what he said to me, because no one want to go near him to take care of him. He was a old man.

What they did with him later on, I don't know, because, uh...

You never saw him again.

No, I never saw him again, no, no.

So, these were all Jews in the hospital.

Jews yes. In the ghetto, yeah.

Including the nurses and the doctors...

Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

When you, when you went to work, you had to walk through the streets.

Yeah, the ghetto you walked through the streets.

So, what were the streets like?

People walked, people walked through the streets.

Were people starving in the ghetto at this point?

I don't know if they were starving or there wasn't much to eat. But you got bread, you got... My mother, my grandmother had a bakery.

Ah.

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So, I had bread and I had what I wanted, you know. But other people went in to buy it too, they were buying it.

Was anybody beaten or killed on the streets that you remember?

Oh yes, yes.

By the Germans?

Sure.

Any particular memories of any of that?

I had no witness it, but I knew about it, I heard about it. That, that's what they did. An old man was walking and they didn't like it. They were in the, in the ghetto, the Germans.

They were not.

They were.

They were, yeah.

Yeah. Sure they were in the ghetto.

Was this Wehrmacht? They were...

The Wehrmacht, right, Wehrmacht, yeah.

Um, were people deported from Kozenice while you were there?

I, what happened to me was I had a appendix attack. And they took me to the hospital—not in where I was working there, not a hospital, out of the, of the ghetto—and they operated on me. And at night, this was the first day they operated on me, the same night, I heard 'em talk, the Jews are going to be evacuated from the city and whoever's going to be here in the hospital they're

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going to kill 'em. So, I had a nerve to get out of the hospital, whatever I had on, I had nothing on, just the, the... What do you call that, uh...

Hospital gown.

Hospital gown. And I knew when I walk to the left I'm going to go into the city, so I went to the right and I walked until I saw a big barn and I went in there and I lay down. I couldn't walk anymore and I lay down. The morning they brought the Jews into, for the camp, they took out ??? and they selected. And I went to the right. I couldn't believe it, that they took, took me to the right, not to the left. So, some friends of mine were there and so she gave me something to change right away.

So, you were part of the selection.

Yes, I was, yeah. After, after they evacuated the city. They brought a lot of people there and then they, to the left and right, left and right, and I went to the right. It was just... Why I went to the right, I don't know. I barely could walk.

This is the day after surgery.

That's right. And uh, we start working right away. After they took the... They left all the, everybody was evacuated. They took us to work and I started working in the ditches. Not... It was nothing. We, we were digging holes, that's all we were doing.

Just to work.

Just to work.

Did anybody help you...

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Uh, we were not too long there, we were maybe there, I don't know, maybe four, five weeks. Then they took us to Skarzysko.

Did anyone help you while you were in the camp?

Not, not in uh, Gocheski, not by Gocheski. In Skarzysko a German woman helped me. If not her, I probably couldn't be alive. My Kapo, she was a Kapo of our, we were working by, by the tables with the ammunition, checking it out if it's right or wrong and I spoke very well German at that time—now I don't speak it anymore—and uh, spoke to her. And I, I saw that she was kind of... She didn't, really didn't want to be a Nazi, but she had to be. I just felt it. And one day, I talked to her and I said to her, maybe you can bring me something, I have a wound and to clean it out and to cover it up. She said, yes. And that's how I got to talk to her and she brought it to me and I, at least I could clean it because it was pus coming out. And uh, she started bringing me food. And one day she took me to her house and let me bathe in her bathtub.

So, she lived in the town?

She lived in town, yeah, yeah. She lived in town, she didn't live with us in the, in uh, in the, in the camp. And she took me out, like with her passport and they didn't stop us. And then, she brought me... She wanted me to go away, to save me. I said, no I want to go back, I don't want to be a... I figured every Jew going to be dead anyway, so what am I going to do by myself? So, she brought me back to camp. And she helped me an awful lot.

Do you remember her name?

Yeah, Gertrude Hoffman. I'll never forget her.

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Did you keep in touch with her?

After the war she came to ??? and she stayed with me. And, in fact, when they uh, there was a court for her and for the Lagerführer, I went to testify because they both were very good to us. They were Nazi because they had no choice, not by choice, she had to be.

Also Volksdeutsche.

Volksdeutsche.

Yeah.

No, I don't think she was a Volksdeutsche. No, no, no, she was from Kassel. No, she was not a Volksdeutsche.

So, she was sent to Skarzysko.

Sent, yeah sure she was sent there. No. But a wonderful person.

And how long did you stay in touch?

I stayed in touch with her maybe two years and then she went away and I never heard from her. She had a child with the Lagerführer. So, I have a picture with the child and everything, I have that picture with me. And uh, then she went also with us to Częstochowa. They sent her to Częstochowa too.

From Skarzysko.

From Skarzysko. And that's the same work we did in, in Częstochowa.

Let's talk a little bit more about Skarzysko. How did you get from, from, uh...

From uh, Gocheski to Skarzysko? By train. By one, you know, they put us on a...

Cattle train. A cattle train?

cattle, yeah.

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What was it like in the cattle car?

It was horrible, it was horrible. It took us forever, forever. No food, no nothing.

No toilet.

No toilet. Nothing, nothing.

So, what did people do?

I don't know, I don't know what they did. I don't know. But it didn't take us that long to go from, from uh, Gocheski to Skarzysko. Didn't take us a long time. And when we got to Skarzysko there was no water, there was nothing. And when uh, Mrs. Hoffman came, I said to her there's no water to wash. Then how can... Then say we're going to get lice, they're going to shave our heads. She said—you know what she said to me—save your urine and wash it with it.

Hm.

That's exactly what I did and they never touched my hair. A lot of uh, a lot of kids, a lot of girls they had to shave their head.

Were people frantic in the train?

Sure they were, we all were. We were looking out and we couldn't even see where we were going. We didn't know where they were going to take us.

And it was packed.

Packed, sure. We didn't know where we were going at all.

Do you remember the smells?

Terrible. I don't... It was a terrible smell because everyone had nowhere where to go, so.

So, when the door opened...

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And we saw a camp, we went out. We got out and uh, I remember we went into the barracks, and there was no water, nothing. They gave us some soup, I remember, like water. And everybody grabbed it because we didn't eat all the time, you know, when we were in the wagons.

What was the barracks like?

The barracks were clean, they were brand new.

Ah.

Brand new, they were, they were purchased, you know. I don't know how many were in the one. Must have thirty in one bed, or maybe more, I don't know.

So, you slept on a shelf-like.

Yeah, on the, yeah, they were... One, two, three of us, three in a, on top, one of top, then the middle and then on the bottom.

But you each had a layer to yourself.

Yes, yeah, yeah.

And did anyone...

I was lucky that I got in with the same people that I knew them from Kosnitz in the same barrack, so we were not strangers.

And, and what were you thinking about your family? Were you wondering?

I had no idea, no idea what's going on with them.

So, this was what, 1942.

Nineteen forty-two, '43 I think we went into Częst... Częstochowa, '42, '43 we were in Skarzysko, then end of '43 we went into Częstochowa or the beginning of '44, I don't remember anymore.

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Had you heard of Auschwitz or Treblinka or...

No, we didn't know, no, we didn't know. I didn't know. I didn't know anything.

So, you were worried.

Sure I was worried, I didn't know if they were alive or not, I did not know. And they didn't know about me either.

And did the Germans give you specific orders about where to go and what to do and...

Oh sure, but like I said, the same Kapo came with us on Skarzysko to Częstochowa. It was a pleasure because she knew exactly what we were doing. It was our luck—the girls that were sitting at the table—it was our luck that we had such a wonderful person.

It was luck, you think.

Yeah, we were very lucky.

So, what was the work you did there?

I worked with ammunition. Those bullets came and they had points, so we had to make sure that a certain point had to be, killed my eyes with it. And uh, we put it, you know, in a, in an uh, when it was okay they put it in one place, and if it not okay we put it in another side, side. And they checked it, they checked it. And uh, God forbid if you put the wrong one in the wrong place. That was it.

Do you remember the HASAG?

HASAG, yeah, sure.

Is that the company that you...

Yeah, for HASAG, yeah, that's exactly.

Munitions company.

Yeah, for HASAG.

Um, what would happen if in the middle of the night you got up and went to the latrine? Did anybody do that?

We didn't.

You didn't.

We wouldn't go. At night, for sure not, no. We didn't, no.

Was there any abuse from other prisoners? People stealing bread or...

No, not where I was in this barracks because we knew each other.

You knew each other.

And there was one of our friends, she was older than us and in the morning when she would cut off a piece of bread and the rest she would hide for us. When we come back from work, then we have another piece to eat. And that's what we did.

So, she would stay in the barracks?

No, no, no, no, no. But she hiding.

But she was hiding it.

Yeah, she was hiding it, yeah. But I was fortunate with uh, Mrs. Hoffman. She used to bring me food and I could uh, give it to other people. Like when she brought uh, a ham, I wouldn't eat ham. So, I gave it to my friends. And as hungry as I was, I could not swallow ham. I couldn't. I was taught that way so, you know, I didn't do it.

Just between us, have you eaten ham since?

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Never. Never bacon, never ham, never, never sausages, I didn't eat any. No, never did. You know, we had it...

If you wouldn't eat it there, I guess you wouldn't eat it afterwards either.

I don't know, I didn't. That's... I have witnesses. They could, they, you're crazy, why don't you. I said, I can't swallow it.

Um, so it was not dog-eat-dog where everybody was looking out for themselves.

Yes and no. We were very close. To this day whoever lived through, we still have friends that we lived through together. No, we looked out for each other, we helped each other.

Everyone?

If I had it I, I would share it. I would never eat by myself.

But were there others who...

Yeah, I know there was a mother and a daughter, and the daughter said to her, you lived long enough, I have to eat your bread.

And the mother died.

Yeah, and that's was... Yes, it's the truth.

But nobody gave you advice and said...

Who...

do for yourself.

who would give us advice? I was young, you know. I was fifteen when the war broke out. I was on my own. Take today a fifteen-year-old, is she on her own, can't be. But we had no choice, so we were. We took care of ourselves.

Last time we talked, we talked about this as a kind of education that you got.

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Oh yeah. Like people ask me, what college did you go to? I said, I went to the best college you could ever go to. The best education I got. They can't believe it, you know, that you survived. If you have to survive, you do it. We were lucky, I was lucky, that's all. I was very lucky.

So, you were in Skarzysko for how many weeks, how long?

I was there uh, two, almost two years.

Two years.

Yeah. And one incident I'll never forget. When I came home from twenty hours work and they wanted me to go take a shower and I said I'm not going, I cannot move. So, they put me in a bunker for twenty-four hours with the rats. And I was hanging on, on, on the, on the pipes because I was afraid of the rats. For twenty-four hours. I walked out of there, I was as white as you are. People did not recognize me when I walked into the barrack.

You hung there for twenty-four hours.

Yes, yes.

How big was the bunker?

Very little, not too big.

Could you stand up?

No, I wouldn't stand up, I was afraid for the rats.

But it was tall enough to stand in.

Yeah, yeah. I just was lucky that I could reach those uh, pipes and I hung on 'em.

And it was probably dark, was it.

Dark, sure, sure.

So no food, no water, just the rats.

Nothing, nothing. And that was a Jewish Kapo [whispered] that did that to me.

So, you experienced some rough times because of Jewish Kapos.

That's right. Wanted to show they're boss, they're boss.

Did the Kapo survive?

I... One did, but he's gone, they finished him.

Did you have to go back to work right away?

Yeah, sure. Sure I had to go back to work.

Twenty hours, was that a normal shift that you...

No, it wasn't normal. This was exceptionally long time. I just couldn't move. I just could not go and, and take a shower.

So what were the normal shifts, like twelve hours?

Twelve, sixteen hours, but this was abnormal, twenty hours, at that particular time.

And very little food.

Nothing.

Did anybody take care of you at that point, when you came back to the barracks?

Oh yeah, the girls helped me. Everybody, they saved my bread and they gave me to uh, to eat.

And you said you kept in touch with some of these people.

I still am in touch with them. I still am in touch with them. My one friend that I was in the ghetto together, I was in, in camp together all through the, every camp that I went through. And to this day, she lives in New Jersey.

Skarzysko was a, one of the worst...

Yes it was.

camps.

Yeah. Yes, the selection was there all the time, all the time. You had to get out and they would take away people and let people go.

So, you would... For the selection at Skarzysko you would just parade in front of people and they would send you in one direction or the other.

That's right. Oh, we standing in line, we were standing in line and they said go, go, go, and they're picking people.

Just looking.

Looking, yeah.

So, there were no medical examinations or anything like that.

No, no, no, no, no.

What else do you remember about Skarzysko? I mean, people were dying there, so you must...

People were dying, really people wouldn't die if they wouldn't take 'em out from there. They just took 'em out to, to die. But when they were in camp, they were not dying unless they got sick and they finished 'em. But if you could walk around and do your work, people didn't die. It wasn't enough food, you know, all that, but people somehow managed. The Polacks, there were Polacks coming into work. They were bringing some food. Whoever had money could buy for them.

Give 'em the money and they bought for them.

And the people who couldn't work, were they shot, were they hung?

Mala Weintraub Dorfman Interview

Sure, they were shot.

Was anybody hung, do you remember?

I don't, I really don't know.

Not that you remember.

No, I didn't see it.

So, they would march them out and shoot them.

Yeah, that's right. When the... One thing yet in the, in the hospital there, I never saw 'em coming back. What they did with them, I don't know.

And you kept the same, pretty much the same job, you were...

Yes, I did, yeah.

doing the bullets.

I was very fortunate, I was really very fortunate.

So, it's an indoor job then.

Yes, yeah, once I got in, yeah.

Two years at Skarzysko.

Almost two years, yeah. I was liberated in Częstochowa.

So, do you remember the day they said, come out in Appell and then they marched you... Did they march you out of Skarzysko?

No, they took us on a train.

Another train.

Yeah, yeah.

Same, same deal.

Same yeah way, it was on a train.

Mala Weintraub Dorfman Interview

How long did it take from Skarzysko to...

Not too long, not too long. Not that far apart from Skarzysko to... From, from Skarzysko to Częstochowa, it was not that far.

So, it was less than the previous train?

Yes, yes it was.

So, did anybody tell you where you were going?

Oh, they told us we're going to Częstochowa.

Had you heard...

Częstochowa, yeah.

Had you heard of Częstochowa before?

Yeah, Santa Maria. The Pol... The Catholics go there to Częstochowa, uh.

It's a shrine.

A shrine, that's right.

You didn't think you were going to the shrine.

No, no, I knew that I'm not going to the shrine. But I was very happy when I saw that Mrs. Hoffman is going with us.

Yeah.

So, I was thrilled.

So, you knew you were going to another labor camp.

Oh yeah, yes, I did know, yeah. A lot of 'em went from there, a lot of 'em they took it to Auschwitz.

From Częstochowa.

From Skarzysko.

Mala Weintraub Dorfman Interview

From Skarzysko.

Yeah, yeah.

Seems to me that something like twenty thousand people were sent to Częstochowa.

Yeah, something like that.

From...

But we were liberated, I don't think there was uh, twenty thousand anymore.

Oh no, no, no, there were, most of them died.

Yeah.

Same company? You worked for the same company?

Same, yeah, 'bout ammunition. The same thing.

Which camp? There were three. So, which...

I went to uh, Barta. Not... There was a Pelsen, Barta, there was another one. I don't know, remember the other one.

So, there were A, B, and C.

Yeah, that's right.

So, you were in A.

C was bad, C was... People got yellow from that uh, whatever they were doing there.

You have no idea what they were doing in C.

I don't know.

I mean...

Mala Weintraub Dorfman Interview

I, I really don't know, I wasn't there, so I really don't know. But for us we worked in the, at the tables, there were machines uh, next to us. And what else they did, I don't know. I, you know, I did not...

Same kind of hours, twelve, sixteen hours?

Częstochowa was a little bit better, a little bit better. It wasn't... We worked our shifts, we went back to the barracks. In Skarzysko, they took us for whatever we did, we had to do extra work.

Oh.

So, it was a different story. Here was different.

So, was this 1944, do you think?

Nineteen forty-four 'til '45. We were liberated one year over there. About a year and, and months, or something like that. I don't remember exactly.

Do you remember anything specific that happened in Częstochowa? Good, bad? I assume Mrs. Hoffman still watched out for you.

Oh yeah, she still was with us, yeah. She was with us. And when the end came, she said to me, no matter what, don't move out of here. Hide and stay in the camp, because whoever going to go out, going to be shot. That's exactly what happened. And she was the one to tell me not to go. Whoever listened to me and stayed with me, we lived through the war.

Had you stayed in the barracks?

Stayed in the barracks. Didn't want to go out.

And, and did the Germans call for people to come out?

Oh yeah.

Mala Weintraub Dorfman Interview

Yeah.

And some people did. They were on the road. When, the, when we were liberated and when we got out of camp, we saw them laying on the road dead.

So, the conditions at Częstochowa were slightly better.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Or they knew already it's the end of them, who knows. I don't know.

Did you ever talk to any of the German guards?

No, no,

It's verboten.

At one time I was, I was out for work—why did I go out to work outside of the camp, I don't remember—and, so somebody gave me some butter to take into camp. I put it on my body. And the guard noticed it, but he was very nice. He said, next time, don't do it. And I went by with it. That's the only time I ever took into camp. That I'm on, no more, nothing would happen. I wouldn't do it. He was very nice and he said, don't do it again. I said, okay I won't. And that's it. I don't know why I went out to work outside from camp, I don't remember anymore.

Somebody gave you butter.

Yeah, to take it in. And I took it. We were so hungry for butter or sugar. When we got out of camp, we went into a warehouse. It was whisky. We could take whisky and sell it. So, we took a sack of sugar because we didn't have it for years, we didn't have any sugar. That's what we wanted.

So, do you have a sweet tooth now?

Mala Weintraub Dorfman Interview

Not really, no, not really, no. I like a piece of chocolate, but very seldom I will take.

When did you first suspect that the war was coming to an end?

She told us.

Mrs. Hoffman told you.

She told me.

She said the Russians are coming?

She didn't know who's coming, but uh, she didn't tell me the Russians, but she said, it's the end of the war. Stay where you are, don't move out. And that's exactly what I did. She said, I have to go, but you stay. When she went away, I knew that it's over, I knew.

Earlier she had wanted to have you escape.

She wanted me to escape from Skarzysko.

Where would you have... where would she have sent you?

To her hometown, but I didn't want to go.

Ah. In Germany?

Yeah, yeah.

To Kassel.

Yeah. But I said to her, "Mrs. uh, uh, Frau Hoffman, if I live through the war, and no Jews going to be there, what am I gonna do?" I said, "I want to go back to camp." So, she took me back.

You would rather have died.

Mala Weintraub Dorfman Interview

That's right than be left alone. What am I going to do? They didn't expect anybody to live through the war.

And back in Częstochowa, did you hear artillery coming, did you hear...

No.

guns, nothing?

No, no we didn't. No we didn't.

So, how did you know you were liberated?

No, this was in Częstochowa, not Skarzysko. We were liberated in Częstochowa.

Częstochowa, did you hear artillery fire there?

We, we heard, yeah, in Częstochowa we did, but we didn't know they hitting us or not us, who they going to fire, we didn't know. But when we saw the guard from up there—there was a guard, you know, on the roof there. I don't know if, you know, they had a special place that they were standing—and we looked up and we didn't see the guard there anymore, we knew it's over. We knew it's over then because he, he ran away too.

And then what?

That was it. But you know what, the people when they said, oh we are free, and they dropped dead.

They dropped dead.

They could not do it anymore. Men, for men it was worse than for women there. Men needed more food and they didn't get it, you know. It, it was hard, it was hard. And then I had a friend, she was working at the machinery and there were Polacks working. So she... They always brought her something, and she was

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sharing with us, you know what I mean? It was easier for women than for men to survive.

[interruption in interview]

When, when liberation came, did anybody go into the warehouse and eat too much and then just...

That's what happened.

They died from the food.

Yeah, that's what happened, yeah. They went into the ca... uh, what do they call it? Not the warehouse, they call it differently. I can't remember now in general what they called it. But sure they went in and they start eating fast. They didn't know what to grab first. And some people wouldn't take it.

But you held back.

But I held back. I... If I couldn't eat the ham when they gave me and I was hungry, I could hold back when I went out. Like I said, we took the sugar. I don't remember that we took something el... I don't really remember. But we could sell the sugar, so we could get bread. We were free then. When we got out and got the sugar, so we could sell it to the Polacks. And we got bread and we got other stuff to eat. But I didn't stay too long in Częstochowa, I went to Pol... to Łódź. As soon as Łódź was liberated, I went to Łódź.

But the Russians came in first.

Yeah, the Russians came in.

So, what was the reaction?

Mala Weintraub Dorfman Interview

We didn't see them, we did not see them. When we got into an apartment, they came and they asked for a big clock they can make watches out of it. That's exactly what they said to us. A big clock. Oh, this what we wanted, we can make a lot of watches out of it.

Were people cheering when they, when they showed up?

Oh sure, sure. But we were afraid of them too. As women we were afraid. We wouldn't go out on the street at night, we stayed indoors, you know. And uh, we were afraid.

Did you hear any stories about women who were accosted

Oh yeah, yeah.

by the Russians?

Yeah, yeah. But we didn't go out, we stayed in. We, I went into a German house and there where we stayed until I went to Łódź, to... Also we went, a few women went, I didn't have money for the train so we sat on the, on the step.

Of the train.

Yeah.

But first you went to a German house.

This was in Łódź.

Oh, okay.

In Łódź we went.

But in Częst... Częstochowa, how did you know where to go?

I don't know, we went, a few women and we saw an empty, an empty place and we walked in. So, we assumed there were Germans were there before. So, we

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walked in and we stayed there. We were about eight or nine of us. And, and on the floor we were sleeping because there was not enough space on a bed to sleep.

Were they all Łódź-ers?

Hm?

All Łódź-ers?

No, no, they were more from Kozenice, they were from Kozenice.

But you were determined to go back to Łódź.

I wanted to go back and find my sisters. I was so... Because I knew they were in, in the ghetto. I didn't know they were evacuated in the ghetto, so I was going, went back to Ko... to Łódź. But uh, I was walking in Łódź on the street and a woman saw me, said, Franka? I said, no. I said, how do you know Franka? She said, I know she had two sisters. And she told me they are alive, they're in Bergen-Belsen. So, I found out that they are alive, but when I went to the Jewish community ca... uh, uh, there, their names were listed. So, I knew they were alive.

Did you go back to your house?

I went back to my house, but there was nothing there. Oh no, excuse me, I got a picture from my mother, with, my mother made it. ??? It's like a Jewish uh, like when uh, God asked Abraham to give his son uh, to, to kill his son.

The Akeida.

Yeah, and then he stopped him, the angel came and stopped him, didn't want to kill, he just wanted to try it. That's the picture my mother made and I have it in

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my house. And I found a couple pictures, my brother's and uh, my father's uh, abba's uh, uh, what do you call it?

???

Yeah. My mother's. And that's all I found in the house.

Was anybody living there?

No, no. In the ghetto, the Łódź ghetto, no. No one was living there.

So this was in a house in the ghetto...

In the ghetto. To the other house I didn't go, no.

You didn't go to your...

No, no. To the original, no. I went, when I went back to Poland I went up there, but nothing was there. Not to the apartment, I just went to the building.

Still there?

Yeah, sure. It's a big apartment building.

So, you were in Łódź, you found out about Franka and Rosa.

Right.

You knew your brothers had been killed.

I knew, yeah. They took them to Treblinka.

They took them to Treblinka. So, you knew at that point that they had been killed.

Yes, yes.

Did you know about your mother?

No, I didn't know until I found my sisters. They told me about it. I didn't see their name on that, the list. So, I figured they must be gone or they went to Auschwitz with them.

And your father?

The same thing. My mother was forty-two years old when she went to Auschwitz. If they wouldn't keep together... My sister, my mother, my sister. So, there was right, left, and right. If they wouldn't stick together maybe they, she would be alive. If she lived through the war she wouldn't be alive now, she would have been over a hundred probably.

Franka said that they knew she was a mother, so they sent her...

She what?

They knew she was a mother, so they sent her to the left.

Yeah, yeah, probably, probably, yeah.

She thought they knew.

Yeah, she was with them.

So, what did you do next?

In Łódź? I went in with my friends and we got into an apartment. It was empty and we knew the... we figured the Germans will live there because otherwise it wouldn't be empty. So it was cold, it was in January. So, we opened up the, the, the—what do you call that, uh—a cabinet and it was stacked money from top to bottom. So we were cold, so we were burning this money. The next day we needed money was good. That's what it was in, in Poland.

So, how long did you stay in Łódź?

In Łódź, I stayed 'til I got married and I went to Germany. 'Til nineteen uh, '46.

But you found your sisters first.

Mala Weintraub Dorfman Interview

No, I got married. No, I didn't find my sisters. Afterwards, I found out where they were. I got married uh, in 1945 and I went to Germany uh, end of '45, after I got married.

Well, how did you meet Henry?

Henry, I met him even before because my mother sent us money from Łódź to his hometown with a woman and I went to pick up the money ???

???

I picked up the money there and I met Henry. And then I met him in Łódź. I went to the Jewish Com... uh, uh, Community Center and uh, a friend that lived through the war and camp with me was from his hometown. So, I met him there and then I met Henry in Łódź at the Jewish Community Center.

And he swept you off your feet.

Yeah, yeah. And then I got married in uh, in September.

Was there a rush to get married and have children after the war? Did people feel that they wanted...

Because we wanted to build, uh...

Build again.

Yeah. But I didn't have children until I came to America.

Did you know anybody who felt the opposite way?

No, no. Everybody looked for somebody to be together, to have someone.

And during the war, did you ever stop to think why is this happening to us?

Oh many times, many times. But I didn't get an answer. I just, where's God?

Where's God?

You didn't...

A lot of people that I know went completely the opposite way, they didn't want to be Jewish anymore.

You didn't feel that way.

I didn't feel that way, no.

What about God?

I was born a Jew and I want to die a Jew.

And God?

God, I asked Him a lot of questions, I didn't get an answer. No one can answer. I asked my rabbi, Rabbi Groner. Rabbi where was God? He said, Mala, I cannot answer you that. And I believe that, like now even, with the floods and with the water, with the uh, with the fires, God must doing all this because people are not good enough. They run away from the religion, they don't believe anymore. A lot of them.

Do you think that's why the Holocaust happened?

I don't know. I don't know. Maybe it did. I don't know. But there were such good Jews and the first one they went, the ones they really believed in God. First ones were punished.

And the children.

And the children. The innocent children. They went.

Because several times you said that you were lucky.

I was lucky, I was.

But you didn't say, God put His hand out and, and saved you, you said it was luck.

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Uh, maybe it was. I don't know, I really don't know, you know, I really don't know. If it was uh, God's hand or whatever. If she was sent down from God and her save me, I don't know.

You thought Mrs. Hoffman was the key to your survival.

Yes I did, yes. And that old man that told me that I'm going to live through the war.

So, you got married in Łódź. Who was there?

My uh, father-in-law. I had a, one friend I went to Basiaka together with her. She was there in Łódź and her husband. And some cousins of Henry's were there, that's all. And my uncle gave us, he married me. He was a very Orthodox man, he married me. My father's brother. And that's it.

So, you were married in 1945.

In '45. Yeah.

Had you heard from your sisters yet?

No, no.

But you knew where they were.

I knew where they were. And uh, from, through the Red Cross I got the address where they ar... were, but I couldn't call them. They had no phone or nothing.

Were they in a DP camp?

But I wrote to them, I got the address and everything, I wrote to them. They were in ??? that I'm coming to Germany and I'm going to come to them. But when I arrived there, it was at night—I'll never forget it—and the M... uh, the MP. So I was, and they arrested, they took us away, they said, where are you going?

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Because there was a curfew, you couldn't go. So, I told them that this is the address, and my sisters are there. And they took us in a Jeep and they drove us over there. And when my sister opened the door, I didn't recognize... They had no hair, both of them. They were in Auschwitz, so they saved them, shaved them. And my cousin Mickey was with them already. So, they were like strangers to me, complete strangers. I'm cl... I was closer to my friends that I lived through the war with them than to my sisters. And, and we stayed with my sister and then uh, Henry got in right away in business. He worked first at the MP, the uh, for the Ger... for the Americans.

Just like a new life, you start...

Yeah.

you had a different family.

Yeah, that's right. He worked there and then uh, while he worked there he start looking for business and he got into the meat business too. And he was delivering meat to the camps, we did camps in Germany after the war.

Did you talk to your sisters about...

Oh yeah, many time, yes, yes.

After awhile, I mean, did you...

Yes, oh yeah, sure. Once I got there, I got a ride there at twelve o'clock midnight, I was dead tired traveling. And then when I came to uh, this was uh, ???, when I was going to Germany. So, the ??? caught me and they ask for the papers. So, they saw I was a Weintraub, born Weintraub. So, a woman in ??? came out and took me in and I had to get undressed. And I had birthmarks here and that would

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save my life. They were looking for a Weintraub which was in our camp, it's true. Her brother was a Kapo. And I don't know why they were looking for her, this I don't know. And she said, no, get dressed. It's not you what we're looking for. And just before, yeah... So, and then we went to Germany. You know, we got through. We went to Germany, we went to ???

Let me stop you for just... I think you told me about a uh, a Russian soldier who was Jewish.

No.

No?

Maybe he was Jewish the one that arrested us, I don't know.

But he spoke Russian.

But he spoke Russian, yeah. And the woman was, spoke Russian too, but yeah, I, I didn't understand what she was saying. But she showed me to get undressed, so I got undressed. And when she saw the two spots she said, no, get dressed, it's not you. So, this I understood what she said.

Did it occur to you that you had come through the war and survived, and now all of a sudden...

Exactly, exact. But they were looking for her, this was the truth.

And you knew who it was.

There was a Weintraub, a Kapo in our, in our camp with a sister. But why they looked for her, I don't know. I don't know. I was lucky. Really, in everywhere I went, I was lucky. I was just, luck was with me, that's all. And uh, Henry was

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outside and he... What could he do? He couldn't do anything. But he spoke Russian so you could, you could talk to him. And uh, they were looking for them.

Did you, did you move in with your sisters?

We lived with my sister until we got a place, yeah, sure.

And this was where?

In ??? In Germany. Near Fran... not far from Frankfurt.

And then you got your own place.

Then I got my own place. And then when he, while he worked there he looked for a business, he got into the business right away. And, but I said to him, I do not want to live in Germany, I want to get out of there. So, we registered. And took us uh, we came to the States in '49, took us five years. Four years actually. And when I got my papers, I ended up making money and he was recognized and there was a German company in Frankfurt that want to take him in the Frankfurt ??? to make, to be a partner. They promised us everything, the whole, everything to give us. And I said to Henry, not me. I will, not going to live in Germany. So, he said another year, another year. But that one time the next door neighbor was going to G... to America and he wanted to buy a ??? So, they brought him the ??? the night before he was leaving and they took him down in the basement, they killed him and cut him up in pieces, the Germans. I said to Henry, I'm out. No matter what you're going to do, I'm not staying here. And my papers came, the day when I was supposed to leave, I packed everything up, whatever I could, what could you take, not too much. Anyways, and at the time I... he wanted to go to Israel. So, we sent some stuff to Israel. But the uncle, his uncle said to us, don't come to

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Israel, it's very bad now. You have opportunity to go to America, go to America. So, when the time came to go, I said, I'm leaving. You don't want to leave, you stay. I'm not staying. So, I went to Bremenhoffen and he had still slaughtered some cows and whatever he did, he sold it, he got the money, he paid the government whatever he had to pay for the taxes, because he wanted to come back, otherwise he wouldn't do it. But he wanted to come back to Germany. And we left for G... for America. And I said I'm not going back. If you want to go back, you go, not me. And it was rough. When we came to America, it was rough. You know, we went to Topeka, Kansas. No one spoke our language. But then we were lucky, we met the pr... the principal from the college uh, in Topeka and we went to school. And he liked us. So, he used to come, his wife used to come to my house and teach me English. Fork, knife, spoon, chair. And that's how I learned the language.

Did you have a sponsor family as well?

Yes, the Posses. They were wonderful, wonderful people.

Is this the Payless Shoes people?

That's right, yes. They were wonderful, they adopted their own children. And when I got sick and I had to have surgery, that man was sitting next... because he was speaking Yiddish. The only one. The rest didn't. And he sat there all day long to help me, to tell them what I want, what to do, or whatever. They both passed away, both, but we're still friends with the family.

So, they were going to make Henry a shoe store manager.

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Yeah, but he didn't want to, he didn't want to. Well, a small town, we had, there was no future for us there. And we couldn't, you couldn't make friends there because they were all assimilated Jews. They belonged to a Temple. I could not go to a Temple. We went once, I said that's not for me. The Posses made a little uh, shul, you know, few people to have a minyan and to daven there. But this was not for us. There was no future. So, we came to Detroit. And we came for a wedding first and I saw people were talking a language that I could speak. So, I said, honey, you know what, we're going back, we pack up and we come. We got in a car, both of us, not speaking the language. And we took a map and I was following the map, he was driving, and we came to Detroit.

I remember Henry said he went to Eastern Market...

That's right.

and he asked if he could cut some meat.

Yeah, yeah. First he went to uh, Hudson's uh, out of, there was a Hudson Company and he worked there for a little bit. And then... but he still was going to the Eastern Market. And uh, what's his name was it that he gave, uh... Meckler, Irving Meckler. They said, they took him in and he said, let me show you what I can do. And he said, okay, if you can do it, do it. And he gave him a break. And he got into the Eastern Market. And uh, then he didn't want to work for somebody, he wanted to work for himself. So, he start looking for a place and there was Schindler and he was selling his little place and we bought it and that's how it started, our companies.

What did your sisters think when you, when you left?

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My sisters... I left the first one from Germany. Then Franka left. And Rosa was in Bremenhoffen, but she had a problem because she had something on her lungs. Nothing there was anything wrong, but there was a spot. And later it was tuberculosis and the American wouldn't let her in. But somehow the, the rabbi from uh, from Buffalo was a friend of the family, of M... George's family and he came to Germany. And he said he's going to guarantee for them. He's going to take 'em because he had family in, in uh, not in Buffalo, in Springfield, Massachusetts. And whatever this, she'll never have to go to, to the government to help her. And they all signed papers and she came, the last one. She was in Springfield, Massachusetts, Franka was in Tulsa, Oklahoma, I was in, I was in Topeka.

Topeka.

And Mr. Poser got 'em all, both of them from Topeka and from Topeka we all came to Detroit.

You all came to Detroit.

Yeah.

You said you were in the hospital in Topeka.

Yes, I was. I was twice, not once.

When you were in the hospital in Topeka, did that bring back any memories of...

No, I was, I was relaxed.

the hospital in Skarsisko?

I was very comfortable because I knew that Mr. Poser's right there. Whatever they see will tell him what's going on. Or he will tell me what's going on.

So, you didn't have flashbacks...

No, no, not at all, not at all.

to your appendicitis. Has that ever happened when something touches off a memory.

Oh many times, many times. I wake, I wake up in a sweat when I dream about it. I dream like the, the Germans are behind me, I have to look at who's behind me.

Oh yes, many times it happens to me.

What about at simkas, weddings, bar mitzvahs?

Listen, we, it's a new... Like I'm going to have bar mitzvah for my grandson. I mean, we're happy. Now we are happy, we have a family. I have children, I have grandchildren. I have, you know, cousins and nieces and nephews. So, we go to a simka. I do think about my parents, if they would be here it would be different.

Did any of your children ever uh, ask about where your grandparents...

Oh, oh yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah. We, they know about it. We talk about it all the time. My... Both my grandchildren, Laine and Devon, took my history and uh, they presented it to their class.

At Hillel.

At Hillel, yeah, yeah.

So you... How many children do you have?

I have three children.

Who are... And their names?

Joel, Gail and Caroline. I have seven grandchildren. Noah, Laine, Devon, Logan, Jordan, and Noah. Oh, and back on Samantha. Yeah.

You don't want to leave anybody out.

Mala Weintraub Dorfman Interview

That is our New Jersey.

Caroline lives in New Jersey.

Caroline lives in New Jersey, yeah.

Um, you told your children about your experiences.

Yes, I did, yes, I did.

Henry too?

Henry did too, yeah. That's why we took 'em to Poland, to show 'em.

But when they were younger did you tell them?

Not when they were really young. But there was, when they could understand already I would start telling 'em, yes. And they knew we're always involved in uh, the community they knew about it, oh they do, yes.

Do you think that your experience during the war affected the way you raised your children?

I don't know. I really don't know. I raised them the way I thought the right thing to do. We both were trying to raise them to be good human beings.

Did you ever throw any food away?

No. This I don't do. Even to this day. I'm very angry with my kids if they throw it away.

So, if Joel didn't finish his dinner, you would...

They, well, in my house I put it on the table and they took it what they could eat.

If they put it on their plate, they had to finish it.

And you think that's from the...

From, because I was, there was...

You were starving.

That's right.

And you told me there was um, a great deal of respect for, in particular, for the father of the family.

Oh yeah, in our house we never picked up a spoon until my father picked it up. We were watching him what he was doing. If he picked up the fork or the knife, we did it too. My kids did it too. But long as... Now I don't know if they do it, but when they're in my house that's the way it was. And I had a, a black woman in my house and she said, your dad didn't pick up the spoon. So, they stopped, they waited 'til he would pick up.

So, that was, those were the rules of the house.

That's right, that's right. The respect for the parents was nothing like here. I mean, my father or mother said something, you didn't ask why, you did it.

Tell me about your trip back to Poland.

I, I myself did not enjoy it because it bring back very bad memories. But the kids liked it because they wanted to see where we lived. They wanted to know what's, what's all about in Poland. They couldn't imagine how we lived. When I went up to our building, I didn't go into our apartment. But I was afraid that they wouldn't let us in. But I showed them this was the building where I lived. And then when I, when we went to the ghetto I showed 'em where they, where they lived in the ghetto. I didn't live there, they lived there in the ghetto. They had to get out where we were before, they had to get into the ghetto.

And you went to ??? too.

Mala Weintraub Dorfman Interview

??? and to ??? we went to, to uh, Krakow. Krakow is beautiful. That's the only city that really stayed the way it was. But the rest of it... Warsaw was horrible.

The ruins that we saw. This is going back... I don't know, I don't remember what year we went there. I don't remember.

So you don't think, it wasn't a restorative trip, I mean, it didn't make you feel better.

No, it didn't make me feel better, it made me worse. Because when I saw uh, when Henry was hidden and the, the parents were gone, but the daughter, Jo... uh, Henry remembered her. And he said, don't you remember me when we were here? She said, I don't remember anything. She was afraid, her par... her husband, her kids didn't know that he was hidden there, you know what I mean. She was afraid to say it. But then he went into the house and he gave his son money. And uh, but then after we sent the money, afterwards, she wrote us a letter, do not send us anything anymore because the village wants to kill us that we saved Jews. This was the end of it, I didn't send her anymore. I sent the packages and the money. Didn't want it anymore.

Do you think the Poles are worse than the Germans?

Yes, some of 'em, yes. I mean, the old people, they were wonderful to Henry. But this was the kids.

Yeah. Do you get depressed sometimes?

Yes, I do. When I think about home I think about my parents, yes I do.

Still.

Mala Weintraub Dorfman Interview

Especially now before the holidays. It's the worst time for me. And I hav-, I'm having a bar mitzvah a day before the holidays.

And that'll be mixed.

Right, it will be mixed is right. The worse is the holidays because I remember at home there was, it was different. It was different than what I'm doing. And we were so happy, we were six kids in the house. I don't know, we were always happy. We didn't have much, but we were happy because we were together. We sat down at the table for dinner, we were together. Came a ??? came a Shabbos, we were together. It's different now. It's completely different.

It's a new world.

It's a different world is right.

Anything you want to add to this?

What I want to add? I hope my children will never have to li... go through what I went through, that's what I want to add. I hope there going to be peace in the world and they don't have to do that.

Do you think it's important to record your testimony?

Yes it is, yes it is. I wanted to do it for a long time, I don't know, I just didn't get around to it. I really mean it. I didn't even know that Henry did it. He never told me. I was shocked when I saw it. I think it's wonderful. I mean uh, I was very fortunate and uh, that this woman literally saved me and that, what that man said to me, that's always rings in my ears. You're going to live through the war and you're going to have it good. That's exactly the words he said to me.

Well, I'm glad he was right.

Mala Weintraub Dorfman Interview

Yeah, that's right. And I can do things for other people.

Thank you.

Thank you.