

>> Man: Go ahead. Go ahead.

>> Goldberg: It's my turn?

>> Interviewer: Please tell us your full name.

>> Goldberg: I'm Bluma Goldberg, and I was born in Poland in a small town called Pinczów, and it's like the eastern-southern part of Poland.

>> Interviewer: And when was that?

>> Goldberg: That was in 1926. Now you know how old I am! And my parents had six children, and we were five girls and a brother. And...

>> Interviewer: Where did you fit in the family?

>> Goldberg: I'm sorry?

>> Interviewer: Were you the oldest or the youngest?

>> Goldberg: Oh, I was kind of in the middle. I had two older sisters, and my brother was older, and then I was kind of in the middle, and then I had two younger sisters.

>> Interviewer: Well, tell me some about your family and your early childhood in Poland.

>> Goldberg: Like I said, we lived in a small town, and everything I remember was really good. Even so, we were not wealthy. My father was a leather merchant, and my mother was at

home taking care of the children because, at that time in Europe, women did not work. They stayed home and raised a family. And I went to school there, and I have very good, really, memories from school, public school. I had a lot of friends, and I was a very happy child, and we were a very close-knit family. And...

>> Interviewer: How did your family observe Jewish tradition? Were they very religious?

>> Goldberg: We were not very religious, but we observed the Sabbath and all the holidays. Of course, Saturdays, you did not go anywhere particularly. You couldn't even go to a movie on Saturdays. It wasn't -- that was not permissible. And of course we didn't have cars to drive, so we just walked everywhere.

I had a lot of friends, Jewish and non-Jewish friends. And when I went to school, when I met my teacher, I used to carry her briefcase, and that was a big honor for me. And it was a small town, but it was a pretty town. On one side, we had mountains. On the other side, we had a lake. So we loved to go -- when we had time, we used to go skiing and, of course in the summertime, swimming. And like I said, we had a very happy life.

We had new clothes for Easter, Passover, and a new pair of shoes. When you have six children, that's a lot of -- that's a big expense. But we were happy. We didn't know any better.

>> Interviewer: When did you notice that things began to change?

>> Goldberg: Well, like in, in nine -- I was -- well, not a child, but I was 11, 12. Like in 1937, '38, people began to talk about Hitler in Germany, but, you know, like people talk today about other countries, what's going on. But we didn't believe it. You know, it's just rumors of this and that.

But they were not rumors. In 1939 -- no, bef -- the war broke out, as you know, and of course the first country Germany invaded was Poland. But prior to that, my parents were -- we were talking about maybe we should go somewhere. First of all, we didn't have the money to emigrate, to go someplace else, so we were stuck there. And like I said, we didn't believe that anything like this could happen.

>> Interviewer: Anything like -- what type of rumors did you hear?

>> Goldberg: Well, we heard rumors that Hitler's gonna take all the Jews and take 'em to concentration camps, or he's gonna kill all the Jewish people, you know. But we had no -- we still didn't believe anything. So in 1939, in September, the German army walked into our town, and the whole town was on fire right away. And we lived in the center of town. In Europe, most of the cities have -- the middle of the city has squares, and we lived right there. And our home was burned down.

So, anyway, all the people, they told us to go to the church, which was also in the square. And they separate the women. The women took the children, and the men were on one side of the church, and the women were on the other side. And we saw the German army walking in. We had to lift our hand and say, "Heil Hitler." We stayed there for about three hours, and then they let us go.

And we were lucky. On one of the streets where it was not burned down, we had an uncle that lived there. So our family went to live with my uncle. Of course, we lost everything we had the first day when the Germans walked into our town. And we lived there till 1942. In 1942, we heard from people that the Germans are rounding up all the Jewish people and taking them to crematoriums.

>> Interviewer: Well, between 1939 and 1942, you still lived with your uncle?

>> Goldberg: Right.

>> Interviewer: And what was life like during those few years?

>> Goldberg: Well, we didn't starve. We had something to eat. That's about it. But...

>> Interviewer: You were already identified as being Jewish?

>> Goldberg: Oh, definitely, yeah. We had to wear the yellow stars, and we couldn't go out in the evenings. There were curfews like after 6:00 or 7:00; I'm not sure now.

>> Interviewer: Did you continue to go to school?

>> Goldberg: Yes, I would continue to go to school. And it was much rougher on the men or boys than girls and the women because the Polish people were not the nicest friends of the Jewish people either. Some of them hated the Jewish just as much as the Germans did.

>> Interviewer: Do you remember anything about how people treated you?

>> Goldberg: Well, I did not have really any problems. I personally didn't. But my brother did, and my father did. Sometimes people would gang up on him, you know, and try to beat him. So they tried to stay home most of the time, you know, not to be exposed to something like that, especially in the evenings.

>> Interviewer: Why do you think it was rougher on the men, or how was it rougher on the men?

>> Goldberg: I don't know. I really don't know. I don't know, just because, you know, "dirty Jew," a Jew, you know.

>> Interviewer: People were more critical?

>> Goldberg: People were more critical, yes. So, anyway, in 19 -- after -- in 1942, when we knew that we are not going to survive if we just stay there, that we're gonna be picked up one morning and take us to the camps, so I have a sister --

>> Interviewer: Had people been leaving?

>> Goldberg: I'm sorry?

>> Interviewer: Had people been leaving your area? You said you thought that they might come and pick you up.

>> Goldberg: No, I'm talking about the Germans.

>> Interviewer: Right, the Germans would come and pick you up. Is that what you meant?

>> Goldberg: Yeah, well, that's what they did.

>> Interviewer: So you saw other people leaving the town?

>> Goldberg: No, I personally had not seen that, but we knew it was gonna happen from other towns, that they're gonna pick us up by train and take us to the crematoriums. So my mother made my sister and I -- gave us a little bit money, whatever she had, and she told us just to leave and go in the woods to hide. And my sister's four years older than I.

So we went, and at first, we didn't want to go because whatever's gonna happen to them, you know, we felt, we all go

together because we didn't want to survive by ourselves. Survive -- we didn't know what's gonna happen. So, anyway, my parents made us leave, and we went in the woods. Later, I found out that my father and my brother joined the underground, and my sister -- my oldest sister had a baby at the time, and the two younger sisters went with my mother into the crematoriums.

Now, my sister and I, like I said, went in the woods. There, we met a cousin and an uncle. The cousin was the one that we lived with. And we built a shed there, and at night, they went in the country to buy food, and we lived there for two months. It was rough, but we didn't know what's gonna happen. If somebody would find us, you know, they would kill us right there.

So one day, this young man came, and he wanted to join us. He wanted to live with us. And he looked like...like he just escaped from prison. I mean, he had a beard, and at that time, beards were not in style, and he looked very rugged. We told him okay. When he went to get his belongings, we ran away because we got scared.

And so we ran to the nearby town called Chmielnik, which was about 30 kilometers from where we were, and this was another uncle that lived there. He was a carpenter, and he was saved -- left by the Germans to work for them. That's why he was still there. And so it was four of us: my sister and I, an uncle, and a cousin. And we were hiding there under two-by-fours, and we stayed there for five days. One day, we could hear the SS came in looking for us because somebody told about us. And they couldn't find us. Two days later, it happens again. They didn't find us. So we decided that we couldn't stay there any longer.

And then the Germans had a new -- a new law came out. If you're the age of 15 to 25, to come to this-and-this place. There are gonna be trucks waiting for you to take you to labor camps. I wasn't quite 15 yet, so I lied a little bit. I always had a

round face, and so they accepted me and my sister, and they took us to Kielce, which is a nice-size city in Poland, not too far from where we were. And there was a German factory that made ammunition.

>> Interviewer: So you wanted to go here.

>> Goldberg: Yes, I definitely wanted -- I wanted to go anyplace because I knew that I couldn't survive there. And so I was in charge. It was a tremendous, big factory, and we made little bullets. And I had eight machines, and the eight machines were as long as -- as wide as this room. And my job was to feed them with material. We called it material, you know. It was just a long -- I don't know what it was made out of, but it made bullets. And I still have these little holes in my hands that burned from the oil from the machine that made the bullets.

Life was -- you could survive there. There were about 200 boys and about 300 girls. And we had running water, which was more or less clean. We slept on bunkers. My sister and I were together all the time. And...food was -- you could survive on it. It was okay. And so we were there for two years in Kielce Hasag.

When Russia started coming closer west, they moved us to another city, and the name of it is Czestochowa, closer west to Germany, okay. And over there, we also worked in an ammunition factory, okay.

>> Interviewer: How did you get news from the outside about what was going on?

>> Goldberg: We did not, at all. We had no idea what was going on, what day it was, because we worked all the time. I worked seven days, a shift from 7 to 7, and the next week, from 7 to 7 at night. And one time -- and it was, like I said, a tremendous factory, and there was a lot of noise, and I don't know what

time it was. Like in the middle of the night, I just closed my eyes. I was always standing, feeding these machines. You couldn't sit down or anything like that. And my boss, who was a short man, gray, and...he was just a typical -- I call it a typical German. You know, everybody was shaking when he was approaching you. And like I said, I closed my eyes for a minute, and he saw me, and he came over and slapped my face. And I woke up quick. Since then, I remembered never to fall asleep again. But, anyway, that's the only bad experience I had in this labor camp.

Like I said, my sister was there with me. I think she's the reason that I survived because when you're by yourself -- maybe, at least, if you have a very close friend that you can talk to -- it is very hard on you when you're all alone. And this camp wasn't so terrible, but later, when we went to the concentration camp, it was really more important to have somebody.

In 1944, one day the Germans came, the SS, and they took us all to a train, on the trains.

>> Interviewer: And this was after you had left and come to the labor camp?

>> Goldberg: After I left Kielce and Czestochowa, and --

>> Interviewer: And how long were you at Czestochowa?

>> Goldberg: Not long, just a few months.

>> Interviewer: Okay, and you worked there as well?

>> Goldberg: Yeah, I worked there too, also an ammunition factory, yeah. And, see, again, Russia was coming closer, so they decided to take us all to Germany. They took us to the

train station, and we went on the trains, and of course we had no idea where we were going.

>> Interviewer: So they never told you anything?

>> Goldberg: No, no. And, you know, they put a lot of people in -- you know, it wasn't like, today, you sit down, and you have your seat. Anyway, we went to Germany, and the first thing they did, when we came to this tremendous place, they took all our personal belongings. We still had some personal belongings from home at that time. And they gave each one of us prison clothes, the striped concentration camp dresses. They didn't pay any attention if it was too short or too big or too what. And any jewelry that we had, everything was taken away from us. And gave us some shoes and some socks. And...

>> Interviewer: And what was your feeling to this, realizing, I guess, that you were no longer at an ammunition factory?

>> Goldberg: It was really bad. It was very bad, and we...we knew that something terrible is gonna happen to us, but we had no choice. So what happened was, they took us to barracks there, and in these barracks, you had no -- it was just a floor. It was just empty room. There were about 40 girls of us in one room. It was wintertime, and it was very cold, with no water, no bathrooms, nothing like that.

In the morning, they counted us. They called it *Appell*. You'd get up at 5 in the morning, and they'd count people. And then they give us a black cup of coffee. For lunch, they'd give us...like a potato soup, potato peel soup, and a piece of black bread. And at night, you had a black cup of coffee again.

And like I said, we had no running water and dirty, filthy, cold. Diseases started spreading. People who were there before in the same room started dying, and people from other cabins or

barracks, people had typhoid fever and all kind of diseases. Some people just went absolutely crazy, really. They were talking to themselves. They were walking back and forth. And...the only work they gave us to do is to carry just -- there was a pile of junk on one end of the place. They told us to carry it to this place during the day. That's the only activities we had. And then the next time, we carried it from this side to the other side.

we all lost a lot of weight. And...we were there for three months, and I think if we were there another three months, I don't think anybody would have survived. We had lice all over us. I had some socks on, and I could see it just all over me, and there was no way I could get rid of it. And I cried a lot, and you became...I mean, you didn't think like a human anymore. You didn't care what's gonna happen to you. You didn't want to live anymore. And like I said, it was cold and hunger and diseases, and we just waited to die. That's all we...

>> Interviewer: But you and your sister were together.

>> Goldberg: We were still together.

>> Interviewer: And you talked during this time.

>> Goldberg: Right, right, right.

>> Interviewer: Was that helpful for you?

>> Goldberg: Definitely, definitely. Then one day, we got lucky again. This commission came, two Germans. And we took off our clothes. They told us to take off our clothes, and they -- we were told that they need some people for -- to go to work in a factory. And so they looked us over, you know, as we passed by and said one goes right and the other one went left. And I was lucky. I went right, and finally, my sister went right also. So

they took us out from Bergen-Belsen, and we went to Burgau, a camp in Germany. They made airplanes there. And...I was painting the numbers on the airplane. It was much better than being in Bergen-Belsen. It was still bad, but like I said, it was better than Bergen-Belsen. There were a lot of people from France, and they were very nice to us. Like, they gave us a piece of bread or a piece of fruit, and that's how we survived.

>> Interviewer: How did they get the food to you?

>> Goldberg: We worked together.

>> Interviewer: I see.

>> Goldberg: Yeah. After this camp -- I don't remember exactly how many months we were there. But after that camp, we were in two other camps. And the last camp I was in was Türkheim, and that was near Landsberg am Lech in Bavaria in Germany. And when we went over there, I had typhoid fever. I was sick, and I was burning up from fever. And there was no medication, no aspirin or anything, and just filthy, dirty. You would just lay on the floor like a dog. And...and thanks to my sister, really, I don't know how she did it, but somehow she got a piece of fruit, exchanged it for her portion of the piece of bread because that's the only piece of bread we got for the whole day. So she gave away the piece of bread to get an apple for me so I could survive, so I could eat the apple, because I had so much fever.

Then when I got better, she got sick. And that was already...1945, March of 1945. And in April of 1945, the Americans liberated us, and when they came in, we were like in a camp with woods all the way around, and we could see the flames every -- you know, it was burning because that was the front right there between the Germans and the Americans.

>> Interviewer: Were you aware at this time that the war was coming toward you?

>> Goldberg: Yes, yes. I mean, that much sense, I had. I knew that.

>> Interviewer: How did you know that?

>> Goldberg: How did I know that? Well, just common sense, I think, just that the Germans wouldn't start a fire there. You know, we could hear the bombs, and we could see the airplanes over us, and so...

And then this American from Red Cross came to our camp. And he called out the few of us that could walk around, you know, and we stood around him, about maybe 10, 12 girls standing around him, and he called me out, and he talked to me. He said, "How old are you?" And I told him, and he said, "Do you have anybody? Is your mother here?" I said, "No, I'm sure I lost everybody. I have a sister who has typhoid fever, and she's very sick in the barrack." And I told him how old I was, and I told him where I was, and then, of course, he had enough just to look at me, to see how I look, and his tears were just coming down. He was crying. He said, "Don't worry. We'll take good care of you now. We'll take you to hospitals and take good care of you. We are here now, and we're gonna take good care of you."

>> Interviewer: Do you remember how you felt when they came, when you saw the Americans?

>> Goldberg: How I felt when I saw this American?

>> Interviewer: Right.

>> Goldberg: Well, he was like God, like seeing God before your eyes, and till today -- of course, I wish I knew now who he was,

and of course I never dreamt that I would be in the United States and maybe look him up and talk to him. I would give anything in the world to meet this man. But under these circumstances, it was impossible.

And...and you could see just -- I mean, there were just so many people around us. People would die in the last minute, you know. We called 'em *Muselmanns*. You know, they just skin and bone and no more energy to walk. It really is a miracle, when I think about it, how I survived. You know, I'm telling you this story in 30 minutes, but this took years, and those were my teenage years, and I lost my parents, I lost my sisters and brothers, and...and I guess it was...meant to be. That's all I can say.

>> Interviewer: You told me how your sister gave you an apple when you were sick. Were there ways that you were able to help her when she was sick?

>> Goldberg: I was very kind to her, you know, and we did have cold water, so I took a rag and wiped her off with the cold water, and I told her to...to be strong, that maybe a miracle will happen, that we will survive one day.

>> Interviewer: And where did you go after?

>> Goldberg: Okay. The Red Cross took us to a hospital in Germany, and the name of it is Holzhausen. It was near Landsberg am Lech in Bavaria. It was a Catholic hospital, and there were nuns taking care of us, and the doctors were just wonderful. And they start us off with just liquids and one tablespoon of rice for lunch and dinner because a lot of people died because they overate after the concentration camp. And we stayed in the hospital at least for about ten weeks. My sister really was the one that was sick with typhoid. Of course, they looked at me; they took me too, and I was there. Of course, we were -- and little by little, we gained some weight, and she recovered. And

then, like I said, the doctors and the nuns, they couldn't -- they made us our first dresses.

And then a girlfriend of mine, who lives in Milwaukee now, we went to Munich, and we looked for relatives, for survivors. And we checked with the Red Cross and everything, but... I did talk to somebody who told me that my mother and the rest of the family went to Auschwitz, the crematoriums. And my brother and my father, who joined the underground, they died just like a month before the Americans came in. So that is tragic.

>> Interviewer: How did you get this news?

>> Goldberg: From other people, from other people that survived. See, like, my husband, he was -- of course I didn't know my husband then -- he was in Auschwitz, and he survived. He was lucky because they took him someplace else, to another camp. Yeah, and so after we...

>> Interviewer: Did you meet people when you were in the camps? I mean, as you were there, did you talk to people and get to know people?

>> Goldberg: Oh, yes. Yeah, some of the people I'm still in touch with that survived, yeah.

>> Interviewer: What type of things did y'all talk about?

>> Goldberg: [sighs heavily] We talked about our past, about our families, if they -- where they were. We had no idea where they were. And...if Hitler's gonna accomplish his mission and kill everybody. And we tried to tell each, each -- we tried to tell each other, I would say, to be strong and maybe we'll survive and live.

>> Interviewer: But you always knew people who didn't.

>> Goldberg: Oh, yes, yes, definitely, yes. In Auschwitz, there were thousands and thousands of women. It was strictly women's camp, a woman's camp. You know, Anne Frank was in Auschwitz, and she didn't survive. I mean, they took people there just to starve. They died of starvation, cold, and diseases. Maybe they didn't have enough room in Auschwitz to put 'em in the ovens. I don't know what the purpose was of it.

>> Interviewer: After you got out of the hospital --

>> Goldberg: Yes.

>> Interviewer: -- where did you go next?

>> Goldberg: Okay, they took us to Landsberg am Lech, which is about 50 kilometers from Munich. It was a displaced persons camp, and it was a camp like Fort Jackson. And my sister and I and my girlfriend lived in one little apartment, and there were people from all over Europe that survived. Most, young people, you know, between ages of 18, 19 to 30, 35, because the older people didn't survive. And...they gave us some clothing and food.

>> Interviewer: What type of things did you do when you were in this camp?

>> Goldberg: Okay, at first, we didn't do anything, but then they opened schools, different schools. Like, I went to the ORT school to learn how to sew. And they had, like I said, different schools, and then some people, as soon as they could, they went illegally to Palestine at that time. And a lot of people were marrying. You know, that's how I met my husband too. He came from a different camp. He came from Dachau. And I met him there, and we got married in 1946.

>> Interviewer: Well, how did you meet your husband?

>> Goldberg: How did we -- how did I meet? A friend of mine from my hometown, he told me, "Bluma, let's go, and I know a guy who has a camera, and I would like for him to take a picture of us." So that was my husband. That was Felix, yeah. And he took a picture of me, and then he came to my apartment to bring the pictures. That's how we met. The rest, I won't tell you!
[laughing]

So we got married in 1946, and he's a great guy. He has a great sense of humor and a will to live, and he's a much stronger person than I am. I'm the weakling in the family, and I get depressed very easily. He tells me that I have a lot to live for -- we do have a beautiful family -- and we should thank God every day that we survived and made a new life for ourselves, and we cannot live in the past. You have to live for the future and hope that something like this would never happen again.

>> Interviewer: As you met people when you were in Landsberg, how did people respond to you, knowing that you had been in these concentration camps?

>> Goldberg: You mean the German people?

>> Interviewer: Right.

>> Goldberg: They couldn't be nicer to us, the German people. And...I'm sure they felt guilty. A lot of people say they didn't know what was going on, but that's hard to believe. That's very hard to believe.

And...and so when my husband and I got married, we moved in to a city to a private -- we moved in with this German couple. They didn't have any children. And they were wonderful to us. They

really were. They had a beautiful apartment, and he worked for the government also.

And we lived there until 1949, and my sister went to Munich. That was the registration, and you could register to go anyplace in the world. So she registered to come to the United States. I wanted to go with her to register, but my husband said, "No, she's going for nothing. That couldn't happen. It's impossible, you know, that they let you come to the United States." But she went, and three months later, she had her papers to come to the United States.

So before she left, she made sure I went with her. My husband still didn't want to go. Well, at that time, we already had plans to go to Israel. Israel was born in '48. But, anyway, I went to Munich, and I registered, and in the meantime, she came to the United States, to Columbia, South Carolina. And the lady there asked me where I would like to go. I said, "Well, this is the only sister I have. We are the only family left, so we'd like to be together." So that's why we came to Columbia, South Carolina. And people here were really wonderful to us. Everybody was just wonderful.

>> Interviewer: How did you get here?

>> Goldberg: I'm sorry?

>> Interviewer: How did you get to the United States?

>> Goldberg: How did we get to the United States? We came by a warship. The name of it was "General Black." We came from Germany, Hamburg, to New Orleans. It took us two weeks, and at that time, I had a baby. My oldest son Henry was 18 months old. And a lot of people got sick on the ship. The waters were very rough. And that's how we made it.

We came to New Orleans, and the Hadassah ladies waited for us and took us to the Jewish center. They had a very nice lunch prepared for us, and we spoke for a while. And then they took us to the train station, and we came to Columbia.

Here in Columbia, we had the presenter from Hadassah organization, and we moved in with my sister. We lived together for a while. And the Jewish community here was responsible for us for the next two years to support us, but my husband and I didn't want any charity, so he said, "I'll sweep the roads. You know, I'll do anything." He was a printer in Poland, and he couldn't get a job because he didn't know the language here. So he got a job at the General Arts, and that was the beginning. It was very rough the first couple of years. The language, everything was different.

>> Interviewer: How did you adjust with a new baby and not knowing anybody?

>> Goldberg: It was very hard. It was very hard. But I was hoping that, once I learn the language and I'd be able to communicate with people, that life would get better, and my husband was a very hard worker. He worked long hours, came home late at night, and I was alone with a baby. Of course my sister was here, and she was a big help. And people came to see us and tried to be helpful. It wasn't easy. It was tough. It was very hard.

>> Interviewer: When you met people, did you tell them your background, what you had been through?

>> Goldberg: No. Well, if people asked me, I did. I know there were a lot of people, a lot of parents, that did not want to talk even to their children or to other people about the Holocaust. But I felt, when my children were old enough to understand, that they should know. I was a little afraid of the

consequences, you know, because children might think, you know, if you were in a prison, you had to do something bad, that maybe they were too young to understand at that time about the war and Hitler. But they were very understanding, and they were wonderful, and I don't regret that I told them. And, really, at times, they told me, that because maybe of that, that we were better parents than other parents, than other people. I spoiled all my children. I held them till they were too big for me to hold them! And I took really good care of them, and I was a good mother. And they are wonderful! They are very wonderful. I hope this is...I don't know.

>> Interviewer: Is there anything that you would like to add?

>> Goldberg: I'd like to say a few words that I was afraid I couldn't remember. I want to thank ETV and South Carolina Council on the Holocaust for this...to let me give this presentation. As you are probably aware, to review these events in my life is very painful to me. I bear this pain willingly if and only if you the viewer and you the student take it into your heart or your experience, too, so that somehow you and I will have contributed together to diminish the possibility of it ever happening again to any people from any people. Thank you.

>> Interviewer: Well, after you've gone through everything, is there something that you feel like that you left out or anything else that you want to share now?

>> Goldberg: I'd just like to say that...a human being is stronger, I feel, than you can imagine, that what a person can go through in life and still survive -- I mean, from my own experience, and of course as far as Hitler is concerned and Nazi Germany -- I cannot imagine that any people could do such atrocities to other people, and this is, to me, just unbelievable. That is very hard for me to conceive and to believe that people can do things like this to other people. And

that's the reason, really, I like to tell this story. I just hope it will never happen again.

>> Interviewer: Well, thank you, Bluma.

>> Goldberg: Thank you very much. Thank you.

00:49:19