

Sarah Seidner
J16
1hr18m55s

Interviewer: This is Judy Eron, interviewing Sarah Seidner. It's June 10th, 1990 for the archives. Sarah, where did you grow up? Where you born and where did you grow up?

Sarah Seidner: I was born in Koloczawnhorb, Czechoslovakia.

Interviewer: Can you spell that? Is that...

Sarah Seidner: C-H-E—Czechoslovakia. Let's see they spell it different here. C-K-S-L-O-V-I-E...

Interviewer: Koloczawnhorb

Sarah Seidner: Koloczawnhorb

Interviewer: ...and that's, I'm gonna spell it to how your husband put it. K-O-L-O-C-Z-A-W-N H-O-R-B.

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: It's that right? And you were born when?

Sarah Seidner: 1926.

Interviewer: Okay. Who's in your family?

Sarah Seidner: Who is in my family?

Interviewer: Who is in your family?

Sarah Seidner: Now?

Interviewer: Your mother and your father and brothers and sisters...

Sarah Seidner: Well, it was a big family. It was my grandma and my daddy, my mother and my sisters, two of them got married, they were not home, and that's about it.

Interviewer: So we had the list of your oldest brother, Ignatz?

Sarah Seidner: Oh, Ignatz was married. He was not home. He was taken from their town where he was living.

Interviewer: Oh is that right?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah and so is my sisters.

Interviewer: [unintelligible 0:01:57.1]

Sarah Seidner: [unintelligible 0:01:58.0] They were taken in '39-'40.

Interviewer: I see.

Sarah Seidner: Once...

Interviewer: And then Schmiel.

Sarah Seidner: But they never—Schmiel was not in concentration camp but he was living, he was hiding out in Poland. Somebody hide them out. So he died not long ago. It's about two years.

Interviewer: Two years ago. So he had a long life?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: And Lea?

Sarah Seidner: And Lea's here in Nashville.

Interviewer: Can you say some about what life was like when you were a youngster those—

Sarah Seidner: Oh, well...

Interviewer: —first years of your life. The first 10 years or so?

Sarah Seidner: What can I tell you, we were going to school. And it was happy and nice, until they started talk about the Germans or the Germans taunted the Jews.

Interviewer: Do you have first memories of that?

Sarah Seidner: A lot of memories.

Interviewer: A lot of memories of the beginning?

Sarah Seidner: Sure, they started take us to the ghettos and they started to give us yellow stars, Jewish stars on the sleeves. Without a Jewish star we couldn't go nowhere.

Interviewer: You couldn't go around?

Sarah Seidner: No.

Interviewer: But let me ask you some first about your school. You went to public school?

Sarah Seidner: Public. Yeah, I was too young and didn't have a chance to go to college because they start...

Interviewer: You had mostly Jewish friends or you had non-Jewish friends too?

Sarah Seidner: Oh it was mixed, we—Jewish friends and not Jewish friends but...

Interviewer: Your family was a religious family or...?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: Can you say some about that, how you observed holidays and...

Sarah Seidner: Well, I observed when the dates, the Rosh Hashanah, the Shabbats, and every Saturday we were going to the synagogues and we observed very nice too...

Interviewer: That was an important part of your family?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. Shabbats we get together with friends and sitting and talking and children played together.

Interviewer: Yes.

Sarah Seidner: So but we—I just didn't have a long time of freedom to do these things. See, because then they start to take us away and everybody was sitting in their homes until they were taking us.

Interviewer: I'm just gonna ask you some questions about some of those early times. The kind of house or apartment that your family lived in.

Sarah Seidner: A house.

Interviewer: It was a house?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay and what...

Sarah Seidner: We lived in a home, a nice home like they call it here, a log cabin. That's what kind.

Interviewer: Is that right?

Sarah Seidner: Uh-huh. We had a nice home.

Interviewer: And...

Sarah Seidner: With land, we had land.

Interviewer: Is that right?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. We had land.

Interviewer: Do you remember some of the things in the house? What some of the things looked like?

Sarah Seidner: It was just normal like here, but the only thing, in those days they didn't have the bathrooms inside, it was by the house.

Interviewer: It was outside?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah, outside. But it was nice, clean.

Interviewer: Do you have a memory of some of the things in your room when you were a girl?

Sarah Seidner: It's nothing really to—of course we didn't had toys like we give today the children and things, but we were happy whatever we had.

Interviewer: What kinds of things beside school were you involved in when you were a youngster? Were you involved in—

Sarah Seidner: Oh well, you come home from a school, you do your lessons, you do homework until [unintelligible 0:06:12] you had to go to sleep.

Interviewer: Was there music in your home?

Sarah Seidner: Radios, of course no television, in that time I don't think we had here, you all didn't have no television yet.

Interviewer: Do you remember when the war broke out? Do you have memories of some of that?

Sarah Seidner: Oh, well, in '39 they already start to take people. In '41 they took people. I was in—they took us away in '43. But until '43, until they took us we suffered. See, we couldn't have enjoyment just like you ask me questions about the memories. We couldn't go on the streets without telling us, "You damn Jew," or something .

Interviewer: They would yell names at you?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah, sure.

Interviewer: And that's with you wearing the yellow stars?

Sarah Seidner: That's right so they can know who it is, all the Jews.

Interviewer: Do you remember the first time you put the yellow star on, that they...do you have a memory of that first time that you had to wear the yellow star?

Sarah Seidner: Well, we had to put it on ourselves, the yellow stars. See and you couldn't go on the streets without a yellow star in that time so...

Interviewer: Did you sew that on yourself or did your mother do it?

Sarah Seidner: Well, I think my mother did but I could have done it too, probably.

Interviewer: Sure.

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: And then when you went outside to shop or to anything you had to wear your yellow star?

Sarah Seidner: That's right.

Interviewer: And people would yell at you on the street?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah, the kids. And holler and scream, "You so and so," "You Jew," and different names.

Interviewer: Did any of the people who had been your friend turn against you? Do you have memory?

Sarah Seidner: Of course they all turned against the Jews, and occasionally like that.

Interviewer: Some people...

Sarah Seidner: Even the friends.

Interviewer: The little children who were your friends.

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about that at all?

Sarah Seidner: Well, what can I say? That's how it was until they took us away.

Interviewer: Was that a sudden change or did it happen more gradually?

Sarah Seidner: It was a sudden change when they heard that the Germans come and the Germans come and after the Jews. So, until they took us away.

Interviewer: Did your family—

Sarah Seidner: They had...

Interviewer: I'm sorry.

Sarah Seidner: We had all kind of, how do you call it, harassments?

Interviewer: That's right. That's what it's called. Sarah, do you have...are there specific things you remember about the very beginnings of that, of learning about the Germans and that the Germans were going to come to Czechoslovakia?

Sarah Seidner: No, in school we didn't had no speeches from the teachers or something, no.

Interviewer: Do you remember your—

Sarah Seidner: It was outside.

Interviewer: —parents being worried? Were your parents...

Sarah Seidner: We always worried.

Interviewer: Is that right? So there was a lot of worry inside the house.

Sarah Seidner: Sure. So we will know what you think.

Interviewer: What was going...

Sarah Seidner: They were talking that we go on to the gas chambers and be in a car, little kid, so and that time it's—sure I was worried.

Interviewer: Your father worked, he had...your father had work?

Sarah Seidner: We had a, how can I...like a bar.

Interviewer: A bar?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah and we had a nice living.

Interviewer: He was able to work until when?

Sarah Seidner: Well, he was—they were about 55 years old, my mother and daddy. Nice, still young people, but in those couple of years until...before they started to talk and they started to worry, what's gonna become of the children, they didn't worry about themselves but about us, about the kids.

Interviewer: Oh I'm sure. Yes. Was a—

Sarah Seidner: Because one of our married daughters, with three children, got killed in '41. They took her to Poland, the Germans.

Interviewer: Who was that?

Sarah Seidner: That was [Gietel (sp) 0:11:13.7]

Interviewer: [Gietel (sp) 0:11:14.2]

Sarah Seidner: Yeah and they killed her up there with the two children. She had four kids and then they find him dead in [unintelligible 0:11:27.2] with two children on their hands.

Interviewer: Is that right?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: How did you hear about that?

Sarah Seidner: Some people that came from there. They took them up there but they was hidden, and through the woods they came back and they said. But they was going around that they saw that. And they shot her, they throw them in the water with two children then shot her in the water.

Interviewer: Who is that?

Sarah Seidner: The Germans so...And that's about it at that time.

Interviewer: Sarah they did set up a ghetto where you lived?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. They set up a ghetto, they gave us there once a day to eat and we were waiting for...to transport us to Auschwitz.

Interviewer: You were taken out of your home, you were ordered out of your homes?

Sarah Seidner: Yes.

Interviewer: Was that on just one day you were sent an order and taken to the ghetto?

Sarah Seidner: They were taking town by town.

Interviewer: Town by town?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. They were taking town by town.

Interviewer: And so you knew it was coming?

Sarah Seidner: Oh sure. We knew, and the way you asked me, how in the home how was the life? The life was bitter and we find out what the Germans were planning to do. So, it was bitter times in that time.

Interviewer: Would you describe the ghetto some? Was it a walled-off ghetto or—

Sarah Seidner: No it was barracks.

Interviewer: It was barracks?

Sarah Seidner: It was barracks. It belong let's say maybe like a school, a big, big...and they started to be very ugly was Germans and their supervising SS. And it was Jews with beards, they start to pull at them. The girls, they used to tear off the earrings with the ears, that kind of stuff they did.

Interviewer: Yes, where was the ghetto?

Sarah Seidner: Ghetto was at [Hocht (sp) 0:13:57.5]

Interviewer: So that was a different town, you were taken to?

Sarah Seidner: Well yeah. They were taking us out entirely to...

Interviewer: How were you taken there?

Sarah Seidner: By trucks.

Interviewer: By trucks?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. It was not really far. But from there they took us in trains like the horses in those wagons. There's a little window on the side.

Interviewer: A little window in the side. This is in the trains?

Sarah Seidner: Train where they taking animals, , I mean horses and things like that.

Interviewer: The trucks that you were taken to the ghetto in, was that something you could sit down in or you were standing, you stood up?

Sarah Seidner: No, just like...

Interviewer: Packed together?

Sarah Seidner: Uh-huh. Yeah.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. In the back of the truck?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: And how far was that to get to that ghetto?

Sarah Seidner: Well, it probably about four-five hours.

Interviewer: Standing up in the back of that truck.

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: Who went in the truck? You and your mother and father?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah, the whole family.

Interviewer: Everybody was together then?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. No, well it just me and my sister Lea and that's about it. The others were married. They were taken in a different time.

Interviewer: That' when they were taken to a different...

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: For how long were you in the ghetto?

Sarah Seidner: In the ghetto we were about as I told you I can't remember exactly the

dates. We were taken about '43, they took us...

Interviewer: In 1943?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. In the beginning of '43.

Interviewer: And you were in the ghetto...

Sarah Seidner: And we would go from the ghettos there, they took us to Auschwitz.

Interviewer: About when was that? What time of year was that? The beginning of the year you were taken to the ghetto...

Sarah Seidner: The beginning of the—yes.

Interviewer: And then about when were you taken to the concentration camp to Auschwitz?

Sarah Seidner: Then

Interviewer: Oh soon after? Is that...

Sarah Seidner: There in the '43 they were taking us from the ghettos to Auschwitz.

Interviewer: So in 1941 you went to the ghetto?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: In 1943—

Sarah Seidner: We start already to suffer between '41 and '42. I don't remember exactly really the date, but in '43 they took us to Auschwitz from the ghettos.

Interviewer: And with that...

Sarah Seidner: We were about a year in the ghettos.

Interviewer: About a year?

Sarah Seidner: About a year. I think probably at '42.

Interviewer: Life in the ghetto was very hard?

Sarah Seidner: Oh yes.

Interviewer: What was a typical day in there?

Sarah Seidner: We were waiting for our death.

Interviewer: You were waiting for death.

Sarah Seidner: Yeah, they were like animals to the people, the SS was staying with those sabers or whatever you call them and they used to stick the man in their stomachs and it was horrible.

Interviewer: You have memories of what you saw just even in the ghetto?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah, that's right. We knew what we're going through.

Interviewer: What was a day like in the ghetto? How did you spend a day?

Sarah Seidner: In misery.

Interviewer: In misery?

Sarah Seidner: Sure.

Interviewer: Just sitting or did they make you work?

Sarah Seidner: Sitting could go on, or talking, the people what's gonna be and everybody was scared.

Interviewer: Did people kind of hang together and...

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: ...help one another?

Sarah Seidner: Oh sure. Sure.

Interviewer: Did the people try to escape from the ghetto?

Sarah Seidner: They couldn't, there were soldiers around the ghettos.

Interviewer: So you never heard of anybody?

Sarah Seidner: No.

Interviewer: Escaping like that.

Sarah Seidner: No.

Interviewer: When it came time to go to Auschwitz, did you have any warning?

Sarah Seidner: No, they just took us to the railroad stations and they just packed us in to the...

Interviewer: Just one day they said, "Today we're going," like that?

Sarah Seidner: No, they didn't tell us nothing, they just was taken us without information, without nothing. They just told that whoever has rings or gold or things like that to throw it on the floor.

Interviewer: Do you remember taking off anything? Did you have any rings?

Sarah Seidner: Oh sure. [unintelligible 0:18:46.8] sure I had a ring. I had earrings.

Interviewer: And you took them off...

Sarah Seidner: We took them off because if not they tear them off. See, so I had an aunt, she didn't had no children, so I was named after her sister and she gave me all the gold she had. So I sewed it into a coat in seams, sewed around all kind of stuff, but they took from us away those things, the coats and then they knew. They find and they had some people and they look over and the gold will stay and they took away a lot of gold from...

Interviewer: When you went from the ghetto to Auschwitz, what did you take with you?

Sarah Seidner: Nothing.

Interviewer: Just what you were wearing.

Sarah Seidner: We couldn't take nothing. In Auschwitz, we had to throw down everything, as I told you before, when they took us we went to the barracks, so they took us apart, the young people in one side, the older people they let down in the other side. They took them to the showers to give them showers. They cleaned them and they put some junk on their hats and they took them to the gas chambers.

Interviewer: Right away? Right then?

Sarah Seidner: Yes, and we thought we were going too but they gave us dresses, those striped, like I told you, jail dresses, those striped ones. And they took us to work. We stayed in Auschwitz, I mean we stayed in Auschwitz about six, seven months and from Auschwitz whoever wanted to volunteer to work. So, me and my sister volunteered to work so we was sure that we maybe make...we have a better chance to live than to stay...

Interviewer: So you volunteered to work then?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. We volunteered to work.

Interviewer 2: What did your mother tell you?

Sarah Seidner: Huh?

Interviewer 2: What did your mother tell you?

Interviewer: What did your mother tell you?

Sarah Seidner: My mother told us to...

Interviewer: Take your time.

Sarah Seidner: And we always did.

Interviewer: You and your sister?

Sarah Seidner: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: That was good advice. When you got to Auschwitz, were you separated from your mother right now?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: So your mother and your father were taken away?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: And that's the last you saw them?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: And she told you then, "Hold hands together and don't be separated?"

Sarah Seidner: And we always did.

Interviewer: You always did.

Sarah Seidner: So that was the end of that.

Interviewer: Sarah, do you remember some of the officers at Auschwitz? Their names...

Sarah Seidner: Well...

Interviewer: What they look like, do you remember?

Sarah Seidner: Well it was a lot of, there where we were liberated, I mean, yeah. When we were liberated we saw them dead some of...

Interviewer: You saw them dead, is that right?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. In the [unintelligible 0:22:42.8] that that the commandant, we find some pictures close to the water there, where they suppose to kill us in the water. They wanted to dump us in the water, and we find these pictures there so we just figured they are all dead there. But we had soldiers, the SS guys in black outfits, so who knows their names? They never would tell us their names.

Interviewer: Did any of them have any physical contact with you?

Sarah Seidner: Not with me but they had, they had a lot of different camps that was there. They ruined a lot of girls, a lot of people.

Interviewer: Any of your friends?

Sarah Seidner: We were about 800 girls together at camp. We were never molested from them like other camps. Other camps were terrible. A lot of places and a lot of not, but we were lucky.

Interviewer: There were 800 girls?

Sarah Seidner: 800 in ours.

Interviewer: That's in Auschwitz?

Sarah Seidner: No, in Auschwitz was a lot of them. There were we used to work.

Interviewer: Oh, where you worked.

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: Pardon me for trying to follow here.

Sarah Seidner: No, it's okay.

Interviewer: But where you work with—after Auschwitz...

Sarah Seidner: After Auschwitz they took us to Danzig. We didn't finish there. To Danzig, and to Danzig we were working on an airport. We were working with cement and men's work, physical...

Interviewer: Is that right? Doing what? What did you—

Sarah Seidner: Cement and everything.

Interviewer: Pouring cement? Is that right?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: You would have been about 17 or 18 years old then?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: Is that right?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: And your sister was just a little bit older?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: And you were doing man's work?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah, sure.

Interviewer: You were lifting and trying to be useful.

Sarah Seidner: And we were digging bunkers for the soldiers, , where they going for war and they going in to the bunkers. That's what we had. They give you so many yards that you have to finish in a day.

Interviewer: Is that right? And you just had to work until that was done?

Sarah Seidner: That right.

Interviewer: You went from—again I apologize for not...

Sarah Seidner: Yeah, it's okay.

Interviewer: Auschwitz you went to Stutthof. And Stutthof to Danzig.

Sarah Seidner: From Stutthof they selected the girl who wants to go to work.

Interviewer: I see.

Sarah Seidner: So we free volunteer.

Interviewer: That's—that's when you volunteered?

Sarah Seidner: Yes. So they took us to Danzig. That was also some kind of crematorium, Stutthof.

Interviewer: Oh is that right?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah, they were building another crematorium there.

Interviewer: Do you remember seeing that or just hearing about it?

Sarah Seidner: No, we were not there too long because we went to work.

Interviewer: When you were taken from Auschwitz, again, they just herded you up and took you away? You didn't know where you were going?

Sarah Seidner: No, no.

Interviewer: Then how did you and Lea stayed together?

Sarah Seidner: We're just—we're lucky we hold hands and we volunteered together and we just was lucky to be together and if they ever they needed something to work we were the first ones to go.

Interviewer: Always would work?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. We just lift the arm and just volunteer to work.

Interviewer: In Auschwitz you also worked during the day. You had to work a lot during the day?

Sarah Seidner: No, no.

Interviewer: Or sat around a lot or...?

Sarah Seidner: We had a little bed it's about this big. So at night we slept six girls over there and just was like...

Interviewer: Is that right, all sandwiched in...?

Sarah Seidner: Yes, sandwiched in and no nothing, no pillow, just board.

Interviewer: Just a board?

Sarah Seidner: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: Anything to put over you? A blanket?

Sarah Seidner: No.

Interviewer: Nothing to...was it cold?

Sarah Seidner: Sure it was cold.

Interviewer: I see. You would huddle together like that?

Sarah Seidner: That's right.

Interviewer: What was there to eat?

Sarah Seidner: Well to eat was not—they give you a little piece of bread for a week.

Interviewer: For a week?

Sarah Seidner: For a week and once a day we had soup. It was either rice or with a little potato in it or something, just soup, just plain soup.

Interviewer: Were you hungry a lot or did you stop being hungry?

Sarah Seidner: Well, to start with when we came from home of course you was hungry. But then your stomach shrunk and got skinny and just...

Interviewer 2: Women told me some...something that they gave you, something to stop you from menstruating.

Interviewer: They gave you something to stop you from menstruating?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. They give pills, yeah.

Interviewer: Pills?

Sarah Seidner: They put in the soup.

Interviewer: Is that right?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. They put in the soup.

Interviewer: And that worked? It worked?

Sarah Seidner: Oh yeah. Never menstruated.

Interviewer: Isn't that something?

Sarah Seidner: Never menstruated.

Interviewer: How was your health when you were in Auschwitz and Stutthof?

Sarah Seidner: Well, I was getting weak.

Interviewer: You were getting weak?

Sarah Seidner: Yes. I was getting weak and my sister, I thought that I'm gonna lose her in...

Interviewer: Is that right?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: Again from weakness?

Sarah Seidner: Weakness, yes. She got sick and...

Interviewer: What kind of sickness did she get?

Sarah Seidner: Stomach, , we were eating oats, we got hold of oats and that's what was hurting her stomach.

Interviewer: Hurt her stomach?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yes. Did you get any medical treatment?

Sarah Seidner: No.

Interviewer: No?

Sarah Seidner: If you complain they take you out and they kill you.

Interviewer: Was there a selection everyday or...?

Sarah Seidner: Of what?

Interviewer: When they would take people out and choose who would live and who

would die? Did that happen every day?

Sarah Seidner: No. No. If you complain to something, it's a lot of kids, they complain that toothache or maybe they hurt they're finger or this or that, and they take them out and line them up and they shot.

Interviewer: Did you see people being shot?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. I buried 40 people. Myself, me and my sister we volunteered to bury.

Interviewer: Can you tell me how that happened? Did they...

Sarah Seidner: Well, it's also sick that a Jewish woman did it. They made a Jewish woman kill them. See just luck. So they took us somewhere, 15 girls, and of the 15 girls, me and my sister was the one to volunteer to help to bury them. So we went in some kind of wooden area and we dig a big grave for the 40 girls. And we even put them in there.

Interviewer: You had to even put them in there?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. We put them in there and we bury them, and then they took us back, we thought they're going—on the end they're going to put us the 15 girls in there but they didn't. They brought us back to where we were working.

Interviewer: What was that like to be around, again, so many dead people? Was it something, were you crying all the time?

Sarah Seidner: Well, it was...you was a like a stone. , we were so...that you probably...I don't know now, if something happened, I cry or something. But then that time you couldn't even shed a tear. See you are so...I cannot even explain. That was bitter. Very bitter, young kids, to see and to kill. So that's what happened with the six million Jews.

Interviewer: Six million. Sarah did you have friends in Auschwitz or in Danzig? Did you have friends?

Sarah Seidner: Well it's over there it's no friends. "Hello," and "How are you." You cannot be friends. You have to do your job and that's sad. We looked each other and we have to be quiet .

Interviewer: So there wasn't community? That sort of thing.

Sarah Seidner: No.

Interviewer: Did anybody try to escape?

Sarah Seidner: Well, I tried once to go out of—that was in Auschwitz. I tried once to get out and to see the...it was very hard.

Interviewer: In Auschwitz you tried once to get out?

Sarah Seidner: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: To see something or to...

Sarah Seidner: To see the parents.

Interviewer: To look for your mother? Is that right? How did you try to get out?

Sarah Seidner: It's from the barrack, it's not...see, outside the barracks you couldn't get out because there was electric wires. It was barbed wires. Like sometime you see on the television.

Interviewer: Yes. Yes, I have seen that. But from the barracks you could—outside the barracks there was barbed wire but...

Sarah Seidner: Well, we thought they're still living, or something, so I sneaked out and...

Interviewer: You actually got out?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: And what did you do?

Sarah Seidner: I just was going to side by the fence and to see if I can find my parents. So another woman that was already before me there. This was a Polish woman and she told me you better go to your barracks, they will kill you. So then I left...

Interviewer: So then you went back?

Sarah Seidner: I—in Auschwitz...you see, I'm Czechoslovakian and there was all kind of people. Hungarian, Polish, Polish suffered more than somebody else, , from early '39 I think, from '39...

Interviewer 2: It started earlier.

Sarah Seidner: Yes but when we came they were very mean to us.

Interviewer: The Polish people were mean?

Sarah Seidner: Polish people.

Interviewer: Other Jewish people—

Sarah Seidner: Yes.

Interviewer: —were very mean to you?

Sarah Seidner: Very mean. I can't help that I have to say that, but they were very mean.

Interviewer: Why do you think that was? That was because they had suffered so much or...

Sarah Seidner: They told us exactly. When they put us on the bed or something, on the table, upsetting couples, and they used to say, "Well, our parents are already a long time in the gas chambers, and your parents are now put in the gas chambers." And being mean they use to report to the SS to make themselves do something and they were mean.

Interviewer: Where there non-Jewish people in Auschwitz too? Non-Jewish?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah, a lot of Catholics. We had soldiers, well that was not in Auschwitz, but a lot of Catholics...

Interviewer: Is that right?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah, was there. So we don't know, but there where we were working, it was a lot of non-Jewish people. There was a lot of them in Auschwitz. And priests.

Interviewer: Priests, is that right?

Sarah Seidner: Yes, and in Danzig there where we were working, it was American soldiers, a lot of them. And they used to get packages from home, and they use to get some packages special so, where we were working with sand, and every girl what they wanted to give, they put it for us in the—in the sand. A can of cheese or bread or can goods and in the morning when we came by over there, start to dig sand, that we dig out from the soldiers. They used to give us matches, little packs of matches, and they used to put the newspaper in there for us to know how far...

Interviewer: What was happening.

Sarah Seidner: ...the Russian, how far the American are and this and that...

Interviewer: That was in Danzig?

Sarah Seidner: That was in Danzig, yeah. That at least we heard a little news because otherwise...

Interviewer: Have you heard anything up to then about the direction of the war?

Sarah Seidner: We lived like dummies.

Interviewer: So that was the first news you had about whether you were going to be rescued?

Sarah Seidner: That's right.

Interviewer: The American soldiers then were aware of what was happening to you there?

Sarah Seidner: Oh yes. Sure they were seeing. If they catch us with the American soldiers to talk, or because they were—for example we are here and they are about a hundred yards from us further but if we made a contact even with the eyes to American people they killed us.

Interviewer: Is that right?

Sarah Seidner: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: So you had to be really...

Sarah Seidner: We couldn't have no contact. But they were scared to give us that stuff, but somehow we managed to not to get caught.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. That's a miracle.

Sarah Seidner: The American soldiers were very nice to us. But they suffered themselves . They were around there—not as bad as we did, but they were all guards from the SS.

Interviewer: I'm not understanding the guards, the S.S. guards...

Sarah Seidner: Yeah, protected them too. They are, how do you say...

Interviewer 2: They were in prison?

Sarah Seidner: Huh?

Interviewer: Were the American soldiers in prison?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. They were prisoners of war.

Sarah Seidner: Prisoners of war, yes.

Interviewer: Excuse me. Oh, I wasn't understanding that. But they were able to get information, to get some...

Sarah Seidner: They probably did. Got packages from home so, they knew everything.

Interviewer: I see. I see.

Sarah Seidner: But they let us know everyday what...how it goes with the situation. So, we actually, we got liberated from the Russians at that time.

Interviewer: From...

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: From the Russians.

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: Was there an underground political organization trying to figure things out when you were in Auschwitz?

Sarah Seidner: We couldn't have...we lived like dummies. We didn't have no information whatsoever from nobody.

Interviewer: And you were kept very separate from the men too, is that right?

Sarah Seidner: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: The women and the men?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. We didn't have no contact whatsoever.

Interviewer: None at all.

Sarah Seidner: In that camp where we were there was nothing but the girls, no men.

Interviewer: And that was in Danzig?

Sarah Seidner: That was in Danzig, yeah.

Interviewer: In Danzig, that was all girls.

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: Were there children with you at all? Did any of the girls have children?

Sarah Seidner: Well, see, when we came to Auschwitz, they took the little children, took the child by the feet and smack them against the walls. It killed the children instantly.

Interviewer: That's right when you came to Auschwitz?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: So the old people were taken, the children were smashed.

Sarah Seidner: The old people was taken in one side, the children right away they took away on the other side, and the young people took in a different direction toward us.

Interviewer: Sarah, did you see that happen to the children?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah, sure.

Interviewer: And again it was this feeling like stone...

Sarah Seidner: Sure. Oh you just got stone and you didn't know nothing. We knew what it is happening but we got so bitter that we didn't know what's going to happen to us next.

Interviewer: And there was never any certainty or any predictability about that at all?

Sarah Seidner: No.

Interviewer: In Danzig, was it any different in terms of the food you were given or the way you...?

Sarah Seidner: It's just once a day.

Interviewer: Once a day there was food?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah, but it was bunk bed.

Interviewer: That was bunk beds?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: And so you had your own bed?

Sarah Seidner: It was—yeah, so there we had it a little better than in Auschwitz.

Interviewer: But still just a board? No pillow, no cover?

Sarah Seidner: There was a pillow, there was a mattress.

Interviewer: So it was a little different?

Sarah Seidner: But still it's no showers in there, lice, everybody had lice and in the winter I had to take, cut cement bag and put on...

Interviewer: You wore a cement bag?

Sarah Seidner: A cement bag and I took out the dress and cleaned it with snow.

Interviewer: Is that right, to clean the dress?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. To survive, so the lice wouldn't eat you up.

Interviewer: Your hair was kept shaved?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: It was kept shaved. How often did they shave your head?

Sarah Seidner: They shaved every, whenever. Not often, not really often.

Interviewer: But you had to keep the lice out?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. That's right.

Interviewer: How did you keep lice out of your hair?

Sarah Seidner: I didn't have no hair.

Interviewer: So without the hair...

Sarah Seidner: It was in the dresses.

Interviewer: I see.

Sarah Seidner: In that one dress you had to have.

Interviewer: You only had one dress.

Sarah Seidner: You didn't have a dress to change.

Interviewer: Was this also striped?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. The dress was striped. I had it here in this country but my husband threw it out.

Interviewer: Oh is that right? You brought it with you...

Sarah Seidner: I brought it with me and my husband threw it out. He didn't want to see it.

Interviewer: Wow. What made you keep it?

Sarah Seidner: I just—I don't know. I didn't feel like to throw it away. I had it in a box. I had the number here on me. You see some people got numbers on their body, engraved. And I had it on my dress.

Interviewer: And it was on your dress?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. So I had taken it with me but my husband threw it away.

Interviewer: Wow.

Sarah Seidner: So...

[technical 0:42:48.1]

Interviewer: What was she saying about the potato?

Sarah Seidner: Oh she was talking about the camp where we was in Danzig. See, in the morning, we had to go out four o'clock in the morning and have our pail. They count the soldiers and there was a square of the 800 people they count every morning, and at the night we came like a transport like soldiers. It was about 50 in each group, came in. So I saw a potato on the floor and I picked it up and that was it. They took me in the front of the 800 people and put a chair in the middle and they smacked me 25 times.

Interviewer: Where on your body? On your face?

Sarah Seidner: Most of it on the head.

Interviewer: On the head?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah and I was so—I didn't know that I was going—I was scared, .

Interviewer: With their hand or a whip?

Sarah Seidner: No with like a police rubber—

Interviewer: A club.

Sarah Seidner: Yeah, club, yeah. And I made it.

Interviewer: Is that the only time you were punished or do you have...?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah because I picked up the potato.

Interviewer: Because of the potato.

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. It was Officer Renat, it was a Polish lady.

Interviewer: Why do you think they did not kill you for that?

Sarah Seidner: I don't know, I was lucky I guess. For a potato, kill.

Interviewer: For a potato?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: Really? Were you ever in hiding? Did you ever hide?

Sarah Seidner: Well, when we were walking from Danzig to Stuffhof to Guttenhaben, it was of course with soldiers guarded, and we were sleeping in a small town, and there we were in the haystacks, sleeping me and my sister. So we fell asleep and we got behind. Everybody was going and we with nobody there. So we were scared to stay there, that somebody will come and kill us. that was in—most of us Polish people. And so I told my sister, "Let's go and catch up with them because we're gonna get killed anyhow," so let's see. So we came there where we caught up with them and he says, that a soldier, a Russian he told us, he says, "You're so stupid. Why didn't you stay in that haystacks where you was?" So we told them we were scared that somebody is gonna catch us there and they kill us. So we came. So he didn't like it was a good Russian guy. He was SS.

Interviewer: Is that right?

Sarah Seidner: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: But he was good?

Sarah Seidner: He was good. And that night, see, they were supposed to take us on the ocean and dump us, that was the ocean. The last life hours. So about four o'clock the Russian came in and we heard the grenades and bombs and this and that so we thought we're gonna get killed there too. But we were sleeping in a barn with another lady with her five daughters and—

Interviewer: You and Lea and this woman and her children.

Sarah Seidner: And that family. So we were quiet there in the corner and all of a sudden we take a look in the barn little window and there was hills in the back of there. And we see the soldiers run over there with their sabres down instead to stay on duty, they were running in the woods and we just got really excited. And I told the mother to get up and to come to see so she came up and to see and here we saw ourselves the soldiers were going. The Germans...

Interviewer: How did you feel? What did you feel? Did you feel then or were you still stone? Did you feel?

Sarah Seidner: Well, it came all of a sudden to you that you're by yourself, no guards around you. And we looked in the front where the doors are open, the barn doors and we looked in the front and it's full of Russian soldiers.

Interviewer: Oh wow.

Sarah Seidner: So the captain came in there and told us to go back, every one of them back in the barracks, and it happened that was a Jewish one. See, and he told us to stay there until everything because they can throw a bomb over us.

Interviewer: I see.

Sarah Seidner: So we were staying and then about noon we went out of there and everybody was [unintelligible 0:48:45.4] home, to go in to and to take a shower and to clean up and to put on clothes, something.

Interviewer: This was out in the countryside? Sarah, I'm gonna back up just a little bit so I can understand this incredible story. When you say that was in—

Sarah Seidner: Let me tell you...

Interviewer: Guttenhaben and you had gone there from Danzig.

Sarah Seidner: From Danzig to Guttenhaben.

Interviewer: Again they just said we're going and it was in March? And it was in March? You had been in Danzig how long?

Sarah Seidner: In Danzig we were about close to a year, working on the airport, yeah.

Interviewer: Close to a year working with all the cement and then one day they said, "Get ready, we're going."

Sarah Seidner: Yeah, because the—either the American or the Russian were coming...

Interviewer: They're coming closer. And they marched you?

Sarah Seidner: They marched us and a lot of kids got weak and they shoot them all along.

Interviewer: As you were marching?

Sarah Seidner: Yup.

Interviewer: You saw that?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: How long was the march?

Sarah Seidner: Well, the march was—I remember it was a night, a day and night. The night is already we dropped, we couldn't walk no more.

Interviewer: And they let you stop?

Sarah Seidner: So we drop and it was on the snow. It was snowing.

Interviewer: It was snowing?

Sarah Seidner: It was snowing that time. It was spring.

Interviewer: This was spring?

Sarah Seidner: It was springtime.

Interviewer: And there was snow?

Sarah Seidner: And it was between, I believe it was between...in Europe the snow is more than here. Here it's coming and going but there start melt down already, it's like before Passover, Easter time. So it's around that time.

Interviewer: And you slept on the snow then that night?

Sarah Seidner: We were laying down...

Interviewer: Just exhausted.

Sarah Seidner: No energy, no nothing and then...

Interviewer: How many of you were there? How many on this march?

Sarah Seidner: Well, from 800 girls there was left about 350.

Interviewer: Everybody else had died?

Sarah Seidner: Who were stronger and they...

Interviewer: They had managed to survive. The others had all been shot or died of sickness?

Sarah Seidner: Oh yes. If somebody sit down and they didn't want to go, they got shot.

Interviewer: There was not a crematorium there in Danzig it was just...

Sarah Seidner: No, they were all along the...

Interviewer: This is just...

Sarah Seidner: Then they pick them up, some people and buried them or...

Interviewer: I see.

Sarah Seidner: ...dumped into the water or whatever.

Interviewer: So a day and a night then to get you to Guttenhaben.

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: And then how long were you there then until liberation?

Sarah Seidner: In Guttenhaben? It was overnight. See this supposed to, when it happened this with the liberation. It wouldn't happen in that evening. Four o'clock in the morning. They were planning to dump us about eight o'clock.

Interviewer: So you would just gotten to Guttenhaben.

Sarah Seidner: Just like that, that's right.

Interviewer: I see.

Sarah Seidner: And that was our last destination...

Interviewer: And they were going to dump you. Describe that for me some more. That they were gonna dump you into the ocean?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. They were gonna put us on the boat and drive us off about in the middle part and just...

Interviewer: And then just dump you. That was the plan.

Sarah Seidner: Yeah, that was the plan.

Interviewer: How did you hear about the plan? How did the plan?

Sarah Seidner: That was some of the soldiers told us what they—

Interviewer: They told you that?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. What they planned to—

Interviewer: The SS soldiers, they were telling you?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: And that's just the very night that you were liberated, I mean at four in the morning.

Sarah Seidner: Four in the morning eight o'clock we're suppose to...

Interviewer: So again, another miracle there?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: And again when you realized that the soldiers weren't there anymore...

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: Did you believe it?

Sarah Seidner: I was scared. I couldn't believe it. I talked to that family there with the five children, the mother of the five children, she says, "No, it's not true." In Yiddish and she went to look and she just got herself with the hands like that she says, "My God." She says, "I think we are by ourselves here." So

we look—I went to the front. I had guts and went to the front to see all the Russian soldiers in the front. So they came in, in the barn and went with their knife things from the guns and was looking in the hay if it's no Germans...

Interviewer: To see other Germans there?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: Did find any there?

Sarah Seidner: Oh they find in the bunkers and the houses.

Interviewer: Did they kill them right then or...

Sarah Seidner: They even asked us what to do with them.

Interviewer: They asked you what to do with them?

Sarah Seidner: Uh-hmm.

Interviewer: And what did you say?

Sarah Seidner: Well we told them to do whatever they deserve.

Interviewer: And so they were killed there?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: They were killed there, yeah.

Sarah Seidner: But the special hours, I think they all got killed. See because they were running away and we find some pictures from them by the water.

Interviewer: Wow.

Sarah Seidner: So they probably suicide or something.

Interviewer: Oh you think so?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: You and Lea were together then when liberation happened?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: And was it the kind of thing where you jumped up with each other or just, did you cry or did...?

Sarah Seidner: Well, she—it was no tears...

Interviewer: No tears still?

Sarah Seidner: There was no tears no more, but she was very weak and wherever I could get hold off some horse meat and things, I kept for her for nourishment until we got to—and then when we got on the place and the house I cooked for a vegetable soups and things like that...

Interviewer: You nourished her back?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. So we didn't get eating like the—it was a lot of horse and cows on the—from the bombardment...

Interviewer: That had just been killed?

Sarah Seidner: So it's a lot of girls went and took some meats from there and cooked and ate. And broke out a big typhus.

Interviewer: Typhus.

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: Was that right? From eating...

Sarah Seidner: From eating and I—we didn't do it. I killed once a chicken and made a soup for her and cooked a little bit here and there and then broke up typhus in that town. So we just—I told we have to go. It was about 18 girls in that house.

Interviewer: And what town was that?

Sarah Seidner: It was in...

Interviewer: Guttenhaben?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: So you...

Sarah Seidner: In Guttenhaben.

Interviewer: The liberation happened you were in this barn and then you were just

taken to houses in the community?

Sarah Seidner: To houses, yeah. But they check out first the town, the Russians—

Interviewer: To make sure that the Germans weren't there.

Sarah Seidner: Yeah and then they told us to...

Interviewer: How long did you stay there then?

Sarah Seidner: We stayed there let's say about two weeks. Two weeks, maybe three weeks.

Interviewer: Again, getting nourished back?

Sarah Seidner: And then it's a lot of girls were sick and we were scared that that town was infested with typhoid.

Interviewer: With the typhoid.

Sarah Seidner: And I just told the girls let's go, no matter where. Let's go out of here.

Interviewer: Let's just get out of here.

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: Were you kind of a leader? You said you were gutsy?

Sarah Seidner: Well, I was—yeah. I was more a gutsy woman, really. A gutsy girl. So we went away and then we came to a Russian, I forgot where it was, to a Russian [unintelligible 0:57:03.8]. I remember even Russian. It's a place where those refugees coming in and then they send you...

Interviewer: To the next place.

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. So we went to somebody who knows about those refugees.

Interviewer: And they were getting you ready then to go somewhere else?

Sarah Seidner: To go somewhere else to the train.

Interviewer: And where did you go next? Were you sure that you wanted to go to United States?

Sarah Seidner: We were going—we didn't think in that time yet about nothing. We were going from town to town, home I didn't want to go because it's nobody

there. So but our plans were, we came to Czechoslovakia...

Interviewer: Oh, you came back to...

Sarah Seidner: But I did not go home. But then, see, it was all over the country Czechoslovakia, the refugees free, traveling, wherever they wanted to go.

Interviewer: Oh really?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. No financial, no nothing. So I decided to go to Bucharest, it was an organization there that all those refugees came together. So I thought maybe I find another sister which I find out that one more sister is coming, like Haya.

Interviewer: Haya was there.

Sarah Seidner: Yeah, she came.

Interviewer: And you and Lea went to together then to Bucharest?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer 2: What was the name of the organization?

Interviewer: Yeah, what was the name of the organization?

Sarah Seidner: It was, I forgot, I can't think of it...It was a joint—like here in the center. I...

Interviewer 2: Like a [unintelligible 0:59:02.4]

Sarah Seidner: No. No, a [unintelligible 0:59:04.5] is something different. But anyhow I went there and we were planning to go on back to Czechoslovakia but then we heard that the Russian become communistic and we didn't want to go to communistic countries. So we were staying in Romania for a little while...

Interviewer: Romania?

Sarah Seidner: Yes and the people gave us shelter.

Interviewer: People were kind to you then?

Sarah Seidner: The Jewish people, yeah.

Interviewer: The Jewish people were kind?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: Was there still...

Sarah Seidner: All kind of people. They were nice.

Interviewer: Yeah, I wondered if there was still anti-Semitism elsewhere. I mean did you encounter more prejudice or not?

Sarah Seidner: Well, I didn't have contact with nobody around then that time. See, but people were nice. And then we applied, I knew I had a very wealthy uncle here in western Ohio.

Interviewer: In Ohio?

Sarah Seidner: Ohio, yeah and we wrote, my daddy had three brothers, one was living in that time. So we wrote a letter that we just came from the camps and we don't have no homes, where to go, and we would like to come out. We had a lot of [unintelligible 1:00:29.7] here. Here at Cleveland we had a lot of [unintelligible 1:00:33.3] very nice people. So they sent us papers.

Interviewer: Oh is that right?

Sarah Seidner: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: For you and Lea and Haya?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. No, Haya didn't go. She was staying in the Russia.

Interviewer: Okay.

Sarah Seidner: See, we left, she came after we left.

Interviewer: I see, just you and...

Sarah Seidner: But we knew that she's alive and know she's coming.

Interviewer 2: Ignatz also?

Sarah Seidner: Huh?

Interviewer: Ignatz?

Sarah Seidner: No, Ignatz was in Germany.

Interviewer: But you found out that that organization...

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. I find out that he's alive here.

Interviewer: Well that—yes and you found out who was alive and...

Sarah Seidner: Yeah, so I knew they going to United States. So that's how it was. So they came all...

Interviewer: This uncle sent then for you and Lea papers and you were then...

Sarah Seidner: One uncle sent for me and one uncle...

Interviewer: And how did you get the new—that was in Bucharest?

Sarah Seidner: But I did not come from the uncle. I didn't want—he was very nice but they didn't have...

Interviewer 2: Which uncle was that?

Sarah Seidner: That Uncle Jack in Cleveland.

Interviewer: Uncle Jack...

Sarah Seidner: Another uncle. So it's my daddy's brother. So we wanted to come from the HIAS and we came from the HIAS. My sister came from that rich uncle.

Interviewer: I see.

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. So she had a really hard time coming here, it was not so hard. So we didn't want to come by—to be obligated...

Interviewer: To be obligated, I see.

Sarah Seidner: So we just wanted to come by the HIAS and we came by the HIAS and...

Interviewer: Are you saying by the HIAS?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: I don't know what that means.

Sarah Seidner: It's an organization.

Interviewer 2: Immigration.

Sarah Seidner: Immigration.

Interviewer: Oh, I'm sorry.

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer 2: It's a Jewish immigration organization. But first you got your husbands.

Sarah Seidner: Huh?

Interviewer 2: Didn't you get married in Bucharest?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: So while you're in Bucharest you picked up a husband?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah, picked up a husband. I feel like...

Interviewer: How did you meet him? How did you meet Jack?

Sarah Seidner: How did I meet him, I tell you, when we came to Romania so when I didn't want to go back home because of communistic thing. So we enjoyed the kibbutz to stay on a kibbutz, me and my sister.

Interviewer 2: In Bucharest?

Sarah Seidner: So—huh?

Interviewer 2: In Bucharest?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. So there it was my husband, which a lot of Jewish guys immigrated people to Israel. So we were there and I was cooking a meal for 25 people, and he came there and he saw me and he had a discussion a little with me, where I am from and I guess he had an eye on me, so I knew him for two weeks, after two weeks we got married.

Interviewer: After two weeks you got married, my goodness.

Sarah Seidner: Yeah, well it's a story—my sister had also a guy, and she did not want to get married until I'm gonna marry first because she didn't want to leave me.

Interviewer: So you got married and then she got married.

Sarah Seidner: Yeah, she wanted me to...

Interviewer: Okay, we've got to...

Sarah Seidner: This is my grandmother [gestures to photograph], she is 95 years old and she came to Auschwitz to be gas chambered and this is my aunts that's granddaughter...

Interviewer: Granddaughter?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer 2: What's her name?

Sarah Seidner: [Gietel (sp) 1:04:25.1]

Interviewer: That's [Gietel (sp) 1:04:26.7]

Sarah Seidner: [Gietel (sp) 1:04:27.1] yeah.

Interviewer 2: Was your sister [Gietel (sp) 1:04:27.9]

Sarah Seidner: No, it's my aunt's daughter, she was named [Gietel (sp) 1:04:32.0], too.

Interviewer: And grandmother's name was?

Sarah Seidner: Yenta.

Interviewer: Where was this picture taken, do you think?

Sarah Seidner: This picture is taken in the hometown, Czechoslovakia.

Interviewer: Czechoslovakia.

Sarah Seidner: Yeah and it was here by my aunt by that rich uncle and they gave me that's all, but they didn't have the pictures somehow from my mother.

Interviewer: Oh was that right?

Sarah Seidner: They gave me a picture of me when I was little and I somehow I lost it. I couldn't find it. But this is my grandmother.

Interviewer: That's your grandmother. That's a beautiful picture.

Sarah Seidner: Thank you. She came...

Interviewer 2: When did they leave?

Sarah Seidner: Who?

Interviewer 2: The Schaeffer family.

Interviewer: When did the Schaeffer family leave?

Sarah Seidner: Oh, the Schaeffer family? The Schaeffer family lived here in...

Interviewer 2: Before the war then?

Sarah Seidner: Oh he left, he was a little boy. He left to this country. Both my aunt and uncle.

Interviewer: Sarah, going then from Romania well how did you then—what countries did you have to go through to get to the United States?

Sarah Seidner: Well, what country, Yugoslavia where—which I got married in Yugoslavia, and from Yugoslavia we went to Italy.

Interviewer: To Italy?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah, so we came to Italy and we stayed there in camps.

Interviewer: In camps, refugee camps.

Sarah Seidner: Refugee camps.

Interviewer: Displaced person.

Sarah Seidner: So, which we had the American embassy in Rome...

Interviewer: In Rome.

Sarah Seidner: So we went up there and applied or immigration.

Interviewer: And so from Rome to come to the United States, huh?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer 2: Eight years.

Sarah Seidner: Huh?

Interviewer 2: You were there for eight years.

Sarah Seidner: After the eight years.

Interviewer: Oh excuse me, you were in Rome for eight years?

Sarah Seidner: I was in Italy.

Interviewer: My goodness.

Sarah Seidner: In Italy, I was in Cremona, [unintelligible 1:06:50.8] there were the Pope Pius lived.

Interviewer: And did you work there or did your husband work?

Sarah Seidner: No, we couldn't. He was—we use to get cans from here from our family and he was dealing and wheeling to make a living. And we were waiting for about nine years there for immigration to this country.

Interviewer: Is that right? You had to wait that long before they would say that they could fit you...

Sarah Seidner: Yeah but in that camp they gave food...

Interviewer: That's nice.

Sarah Seidner: ...and the joint, the American joint.

Interviewer: Did you come then to United States by boat? On a ship or a plane?

Sarah Seidner: Well, we were supposed to go by plane, and we just got even the tickets already and then came down airplane in Rome on the [unintelligible 1:07:51.0], it's on the airport, and I got cold feet. I was scared to go. I told my husband I don't want to go by plane.

Interviewer 2: You had two children by then.

Sarah Seidner: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: Oh is that right? You had two children by then?

Sarah Seidner: Two children, yeah. A boy and a girl, Leo and Janice.

Interviewer: Leo and Janice.

Sarah Seidner: And then we went back to Rome and told them that I'm scared to go by plane and they gave us a boat ticket. So...what was the name of that boat? American...

Interviewer 2: Constitution?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah.

Interviewer: And that's the boat?

Sarah Seidner: Uh-huh. American Constitution. It was a nice boat.

Interviewer: So when you came to the United States then, what did you come with? What did you have?

Sarah Seidner: Well, I had some clothes that I accumulated already from...and the two children. Which was very important for us.

Interviewer: Yes, why you said you wanted a big family.

Sarah Seidner: Yeah, I wanted six children.

Interviewer: Can you say more about that? You wanted a big family because...

Sarah Seidner: Because I want—because of the, I lost. They were [unintelligible 1:09:14.4]

Interviewer: You're gonna recreate...

Sarah Seidner: I want to recreate the family and we sure did a good job at it.

Interviewer 2: Sure did.

Interviewer: That's really true.

Interviewer 2: Five children.

Sarah Seidner: I'm really proud of, they're nice children.

Interviewer: Oh I hear you. Let me ask you, how do you think you were able to survive? How come you're sitting here today?

Sarah Seidner: It just—God's help.

Interviewer: Did you keep your faith in God?

Sarah Seidner: Oh sure, always.

Interviewer: Always?

Sarah Seidner: Always.

Interviewer: And that helps?

Sarah Seidner: Sure it helps. You have to believe in something and I just was hoping, of course you were thinking so many people getting killed but somehow God took care of us.

Interviewer: How do you feel about being Jewish now?

Sarah Seidner: I am very proud of it. My faith when I came to this country—when I came to this country and I find some Jewish people on the bus, American Jews and they start to talk and talk Jewish. So I told them I'm very proud of my Jewish. I'm not ashamed of it. I'm Jewish and I'm going to be Jewish. Of course I respect every religion. I grew up between Christian very nice people and I—but you grew up your religion. You like your religion.

Interviewer: When you came to the United States did you go to Cleveland or did you come to Nashville or where did you go?

Sarah Seidner: No, we came to Nashville.

Interviewer: You came right to Nashville. Why to Nashville?

Sarah Seidner: Because my brother and my sister was already here. See, my sister left earlier than I.

Interviewer: That's Lea?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah. See my husband got a little sick coming here and he had to stay in Italy for a little while until we can immigrate here.

Interviewer 2: What was he sick with?

Interviewer: What was he sick with?

Sarah Seidner: They thought that he has, on his lungs something, a little mark for undernourished and things like that. So he needed this, to be seen and treated and see because United States would not let in...

Interviewer: Did you come without him then and he came later?

Sarah Seidner: No.

Interviewer: You all came together. What effect do you think that all of your experiences have had on how you've raised your children? How has all this affected how you've raised your children?

Sarah Seidner: You mean here. I raised...

Interviewer: The whole experience with the concentration camp.

Sarah Seidner: I raised my kids very nicely as that I think, because my children...I didn't let know my kids what I suffered. I was looking forward. I didn't look behind me. I look—I was going forward. I had the kids, had their growing stages and I was growing with them. I played the part of the kids as my...not like a mother, it's like a part of the children...

Interviewer: Because you missed your childhood...

Sarah Seidner: Yeah and we never was—my husband start to live...the Jewish center helped us out. They did very good. They didn't want us to get—we didn't like help, so we went all the time to tell them, we don't need nothing, and my husband went for \$25 to work a week...

Interviewer: Oh my goodness, doing what?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah but in that time, by name of Klein, that's Hungarian, he was a jeweler.

Interviewer: A jeweler?

Sarah Seidner: And he learned the trade there.

Interviewer: What year was it then when you came here?

Sarah Seidner: '54.

Interviewer: '54.

Sarah Seidner: 1954.

Interviewer: So he went to work at as a jeweler?

Sarah Seidner: So he went to jeweler and made \$25 but in those days for \$15 you went to the grocery and went a full buggy with grocery and now you don't buy nothing. And I use to save up \$5 a week and then I took in boarders. I took in two boarders.

Interviewer: You took in two boarders?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah, I made more money than my husband did, and I made money and saved up two and half thousand dollars.

Interviewer: Oh my goodness.

Sarah Seidner: And we bought a house.

Interviewer: That's when you bought a house.

Sarah Seidner: And we went again in the center and told—beg them not to send us no checks.

Interviewer: Oh my goodness.

Sarah Seidner: And until finally we got in the last checks so my husband took the check and took it back in the center. So we never was hungry. We always had money.

Interviewer: Do you still dream about your experiences?

Sarah Seidner: Well, I don't dream but...

Interviewer: Do you have nightmares or anything?

Sarah Seidner: No. No, I just—we think about it, I mean but as far as the children, I used to tell them but I did not want the kids that much to know and to hurt their little hearts. I didn't want, but they knew what was going on, but not as much like they know now what's going on.

Interviewer: Now you've told them more?

Sarah Seidner: Yeah, but I'm not used to—I saw my kids they—one of them was twice sweetheart and used to go on parties and chaperones and dinners and they everywhere, where they go I had to go with them. Foremost and I told you I enjoyed my children. I did, Sammy was – [1:15:39:3] husband, Sammy was twice beau, and used to go, I used to do things.

Interviewer: How do you think all that, all these experiences in the ghetto and in the concentration camps and coming to United States, how has all that affected you? How has all that changed you?

Sarah Seidner: Let me tell you something. I couldn't be happier for somebody to be than for us to be in a country like this. Because a lot of people here in this country they don't know how to appreciate this country.

Interviewer: And you do?

Sarah Seidner: That's right.

Interviewer: I hear you.

Sarah Seidner: And whoever don't appreciate they should go to—they should go there where they want to and not to be here in the first place.

Interviewer: That's your message to people.

Sarah Seidner: That's right.

Interviewer: Yes.

Sarah Seidner: That's right.

Interviewer: Let me ask you one other thing Sarah...

Sarah Seidner: This is a wonderful country. That's true.

Interviewer: Yes and you really have the heart to appreciate it. You have the experiences and...

Sarah Seidner: Oh sure. My husband never—what I want to tell you a while ago, that we never went to unemployment or stay in line for food stamps or for things like that, we stand on our own.

Interviewer: Really on your own, yes.

Sarah Seidner: That's right.

Interviewer: How do you feel about the reunification in Germany now, with East and West Germany getting back together?

Sarah Seidner: I don't know. It's who knows. Time will tell but Gorbachev and you saw it on the television they're pretty scared. They are tough people. They are tough people and they are something scared off.

Interviewer: Yes, I hear you.

Sarah Seidner: Something to be scared of. And Europe, they are scared of. So I hope it's not going to happen no more.

Interviewer: Yeah, really.

Sarah Seidner: But it is happen, it does.

Interviewer: Sarah is there anything else you'd like to put on this tape to tell people before we finish, is there any messages you'd like to leave with people?

Sarah Seidner: Well, I just like to leave with the people to be proud what they have here and to take care of this country and to unify and to be more...better to each other than they use to be, good and people get now a little strangers from their neighbors. So they should come back and to work for their country. See and to be like it used to be. That's what my message to the people. This is a beautiful country and it couldn't be a better wherever they go, couldn't be better than United States.

Interviewer: Well, thank you.

Sarah Seidner: Thank you.

Interviewer: Thank you very much.

Sarah Seidner: Thank you.