

Transcript:

Irvin and Elizabeth Limor

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Interviewer: So I'm talking with Elizabeth and Irvin Limor

Elizabeth: Limor.

Interviewer: Limor. Say it again?

Elizabeth: Limor.

Interviewer: Limor. And it is May 20, 1990. Tell me who you were by name before the war and where you lived and we can start with you.

Irvin: All right.

Elizabeth: Your full name.

Irvin: My full name was...some would call me Itzhak. And I was called Itzhak Nahum.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. And what was your family name?

Irvin: Lipschitz.

Interviewer: Lipschitz. Now you were...that was a Polish name.

Irvin: That was Jewish Polish name.

Interviewer: Jewish Polish name...so that anyone seeing the spelling of the name would know that you were Jewish and Polish.

Irvin: Right.

Interviewer: In what city did you live in Irvin?

Irvin: In Częstochowa.

Interviewer: Where is that in Poland?

Irvin: It was in Southwestern Poland.

Interviewer: And Elizabeth?

Interviewee: I am...my name is even more difficult. It's Dobrzynski, spelled D-O-B-R-Z-Y-N-S-K-I. It was typically a Polish name which originated from the place where my father was born. I don't know really the city where he was

born, but in this region of the lent of Dobrzynski. So this originated...the people who lived there got the name. And—

Interviewer: So one would not know from your name that you were Jewish?

Elizabeth: No.

Interviewer: But Polish?

Elizabeth: That's right. I had a teacher who was Polish who had the same name. Now, I am from the city of Lodz which was a Polish Manchester. It was rather the central Poland, about 60 miles, if am not mistaken, from Warsaw, the second largest city.

Interviewer: So you two, of course, did not know each other before the war at all. Irvin, you mentioned your name Yutchuk was your given name?

Elizabeth: Itzhak.

Irvin: Itzhak

Interviewer: Were you observed...an observant Jewish family when you grew up?

Irvin: Yes.

Interviewer: Did you get a Jewish education?

Irvin: Yes. In so far with the Bar Mitzvah.

Interviewer: And was yours...

Elizabeth: I am very sorry to say that girls in Poland, Jewish girls did not get religious this upbringing. I mean, I knew that I am Jewish. We celebrated the holidays, but as for education, the girls did not get any. I did not know to read Hebrew. I did not know the letters. And I had very little all-around religious education.

Interviewer: What about your other—

Elizabeth: We were rather traditional.

Interviewer: What about your other education?

Elizabeth: My education stopped...no, I could...in Poland was such a system, either you could finish the middle school and you got a diploma or you had to go to the two more classes, two more grades which would be the equivalent of matriculation here. So I finished only until I was 15.

Interviewer: Alright. And your husband, how many years of education?

Irvin: I went to high school.

Elizabeth: This is it?

Irvin: Yeah, that's it.

Elizabeth: In Poland, the Jews had very limited possibilities to go to universities. I had a very dear friend whom I met during the war, and he studied medicine. He was one of very few Jews who was admitted to the university in Warsaw or Krakow, I don't remember. He was three times thrown down all the steps by his colleagues, so-called. It was a very, very big antisemitism in Poland. So it was now...you see, my brother who was 10 years older had to go to study in France. He was 17 years old, and he was sent out, this 17-year-old, abroad because he couldn't study in Poland.

Interviewer: Elizabeth, you remember as a child acts against you, toward you because of you being Jewish?

Elizabeth: Before the Germans came, yes.

Interviewer: Before the Germans.

Elizabeth: Let's say, if I would not bring my copy book or my homework on Monday to school, I would not be excused, while a Gentile girl came and said to the teacher, "I couldn't make it because I didn't have paper to write on and only the Jewish stores were open, and I would not go to a Jewish store." And she was excused.

Interviewer: Did you, Irvin, experience acts against you?

Irvin: Yes. There were fighting every time on my way to school. There were fights on my way. But the fights were one-sided. If I went to school with the...it was a private Jewish gymnasium where Dr. Ochsner was the owner and the director of school. And on the way to school, a bunch of Polish high school students who jumped us, and they tried to beat us as much as they could. And we tried to defend ourselves as much as we could. But it was normal way of going to school. It was never a walk to school without a fight. I don't remember a day like that.

Interviewer: What was the year of your birth?

Irvin: 1922.

Interviewer: '22, and the year--

Elizabeth: I was older, half a year...

Interviewer: What is that again?

Elizabeth: He married an older woman. I'm half-a-year older.

Interviewer: Half-a-year older. So both of you were still in high school when the Germans invaded Poland?

Elizabeth: No, I would be equivalent, but I went already to designer school, I learned profession. Only...of my class of high school, only two girls went abroad to study. They were really extremely bright. Because it was really not...for girls was not very important to finish high school, because what would they do later, they would be bookkeepers, learn bookkeeping. You

know, there was no higher education, no possibility for higher education, only abroad.

Interviewer: Before the war, do you both remember talk of a war coming in your family?

Elizabeth: Yes, because the radio was full of Mr. Hitler screeching, and we knew that something is coming definitely. But nobody...as long as you are at your own home, you don't think about running away. Why do you have to go away? They probably will not come here, and this is your place, so why should you go away? Where?

Irvin: Now we has advantage with Dr. Ochsner, principal of the high school. They often talked about it. But then the place that we took part, a political place, and he committed suicide before the Germans came in, so sure was he what was going to happen. He and his wife committed suicide before the Germans came in, about a day before they came in.

Interviewer: What did your father do, Irvin?

Irvin: My father didn't have education, but without education, he started a shoe factory. He was a very successful man.

Elizabeth: He was a successful businessman.

Interviewer: Do you remember him talking about a war coming?

Irvin: Yes.

Interviewer: And what would happen?

Irvin: Nobody was thinking about it, but something like that can happen. It was very...that was a complete surprise.

Interviewer: And what did your father do?

Elizabeth: My father died when I was not six. And this was a fatherless family. My mother and my sister, I was the youngest in the family, were at home. And my brother was abroad, already after study. He was abroad. So we hoped, when something happened, that nothing will happen to him. Unfortunately, things happened to him too because he was in France, and then he ran to Belgium. And we thank God that we met after the war. Unfortunately, we had only five years together and he died here in Nashville. This is why we came here.

Interviewer: I see.

Elizabeth: You probably knew his son even.

Interviewer: I probably knew...

Elizabeth: He's my brother's son.

Interviewer: Oh.

Elizabeth: His name was Dubrin, John Dubrin.

Interviewer: Yes, yes, yes.

Elizabeth: Okay.

Interviewer: So tell me then how your life changed when the war started?

Irvin: The first thing was my father was the type of man who would sit down and takes whatever happens. He always tried to do something about it whatever he could, so the decision was that we will run away from Częstochowa because Częstochowa is close to the German border, and we had already...we saw already Polish soldiers wounded and taken to a hospital. So we started off walking to east. With German border on the west, we walked to east. And I remember we came to a little village. It was along the way. And there was a Jewish village there. Ninety percent of the people there were Jewish. And when the Germans marched in over, they started to divide food, to give food, lend out food. Now personally, from the history of the family, I was taught that the German people were honest people and the people who were going to count. The reason for it was that my mother's sister was, during the past World War, was killed by a Polish peasant with an ax. We attempted to make a...

Elizabeth: Pogrom.

Irvin: ...make a pogrom, but then when the Germans came in, and they stopped it.

Elizabeth: Pogrom is mass assault.

Interviewer: Yes.

Irvin: The Germans stopped it so mother was showing that German people have feeling of justice.

Elizabeth: Because during the First World War, the Germans were fighting the Russians, and the Russians were the enemies. The Germans were the good guys.

Interviewer: So they had expected the Germans to behave in a decent way?

Irvin: Yeah.

Interviewer: And what happened?

Irvin: So as we were running away, there was no communication, there were no trains. So on the way we caught a little wagon, the peasant was riding toward east, so we bought a place on his wagon to give us a ride. So we were riding around, say, about 25 miles or so, and we saw Polish soldiers wounded. They're coming from the front. And then there came German airplanes, so they started bombarding the civil population on the way, on the road just walking, riding the wagons or whatever. Everything was bombed. There was one neighbor or so of a guy whose wagon we're riding, and he intended to rob us in the forest. He took out the knife and demanded money. We resisted. And there came the German planes and bombarded everything and also shooting.

Elizabeth: Machine guns.

Irvin: The machine guns. So while they were shooting the machine guns, our luck was the guy with the knife got the bullet before anything happened. So we were saved from this situation by the Germans.

Interviewer: What do you remember about the outbreak of the war?

Elizabeth: I remember sitting in the basement. I remember when the Germans came. I remember the men, like Irvin, in our city coming back in masses because they were already pushed back. They didn't have anywhere to go. And then I remember the bombardment, and we were sitting in the basement.

Interviewer: Are you referring to artillery or airplanes?

Elizabeth: The airplanes, airplanes, yeah. So we were sitting in the basement. I remember my mother was a very strong person, and she was holding my hand, and I was shivering. I was very much afraid of war, which I once saw the...in the movie, the First World War, and I was afraid. And I remember we didn't have any food. We couldn't take. We didn't have time to take from our home, food. So we were sitting there without food with other people. We were not the only one in this position. And funny how many things escape my mind. I don't remember anymore. I remember when they came, when the Germans first came, and I saw that this was September 3rd. I read in the Holocaust encyclopedia that it was September 8th. I would swear that it was September 3rd, and I think that I am right. But many things escape my memory, and yet a few days ago I talked my grandson he asked me questions about, and I told him. And suddenly something came to me, something that I absolutely did not remember all the years. We talked about dehumanization, how the Germans started to dehumanize us and slowly, slowly, day by day, and worse and worse, and suddenly it came to me. So when we will talk about this I will tell you about it. Because these already happened in the

concentration camp, so I don't know if you want to talk about it. We don't remember, I don't remember.

Interviewer: All right. So why don't I just say to one and then the another tell your story.

Elizabeth: Fine.

Irvin: Okay.

Elizabeth: It will take double time because—

Interviewer: Then we'll take double time, but you two can interact with each other—

Irvin: Yeah.

Interviewer: —in the course of that. All right.

Irvin: That's good...thank you, because I wanted really to [unintelligible 0:20:35]. The reason for it I don't know, but in our town, Częstochowa, and it's happened in every town time-wise, Monday. Monday was the time when the Germans were throwing the first...

Elizabeth: This was the Black Monday.

Irvin: Yeah. The first feeling of fright—

Elizabeth: Fright.

Irvin: —of the population. So they went into churches and forced all people to go into the churches, but of course usually we're not forced into the churches, just go into synagogues. We didn't have to go to a church to get here. And then we walked into a church and watching gunfire killed the whole population. So everything go up, we started to walk. They put outside a placard...

Elizabeth: A notice.

Irvin: ...a notice that somebody did hurt the German soldier and that's what happened. And at that time a German soldier will get help that's a way to a bigger responsibility.

Interviewer: Go ahead and tell us your story of what happened to you and your family after the invasion.

Irvin: All right. So we ran away as far as we could and the Germans, of course, they caught up with us and we came back home. We left at home a cousin of my mother, and he was supposed to take care of whoever gets home. He did the best he could and of course there were thefts and the removal of materials from the factory. It's not his fault. And then one Saturday, it was, the Germans came in and told all Jews to come out for work and then we wanted to hide. Mother said, "If they catch you, they'll kill you."

Elizabeth: May interrupt, Irvin. He forgot that his father was taken in the beginning of the war to work. And this was very cold winter, and he caught

pneumonia and he died. So at this time when he says, the father was not around anymore. Okay, go ahead.

Irvin: Okay. So I went to work. I was a young guy. They did not help me as much. And my father was at that time approximately 40 years old. And he got sick, and when he came back he couldn't do nothing but stand by the oven and warm himself. So he got sicker and sicker. And the doctor...

Elizabeth: Can I help out?

Interviewer: Yes, please.

Elizabeth: And his father died. Needless to say that they could not go to the cemetery, and this was it. And this is when, when Irvin spoke about the cousin took over and did what he could, but he couldn't. Meanwhile, people were starting to hide. This I know from what Irvin told me. He has a little bit loss of memory, but I remember it. And he built a hiding place. Was it in the house or on the attic, I don't remember.

Irvin: Yeah, the attic above our apartment. The attic belonged to our apartment, so I built...I had personally built it when it comes to hiding or building of things like that. So I did build a hiding place, a bunker. Mother prepared food for a year. What I did however was a drawer-like. The drawer was made out of brick, the same bricks that took out from the opening which I made, so they're all the same bricks. I made the drawer, so we could push in and push out. And when it was brought back in, nobody could see that there was any entrance. A good hiding place.

Interviewer: Now, when was that? They built a hiding place, 1940?

Irvin: It was the before...

Elizabeth: This must have been in 1940. You know it's so hard really to come to remember the dates. So many things happened in between. A new life now. I cannot explain it how...

Irvin: At the same time we lived, at combat time when they come, five Gestapo men. We were told that we are rich people, and they want us to give anything that we have of value.

Elizabeth: Especially leather.

Irvin: No, no.

Elizabeth: Leather, this time they took.

Irvin: No.

Elizabeth: Okay.

Irvin: Somewhere we were to get, I was making business with gold coins which was to open it. I was dealing with gold coins. Because I was dealing so much, they knew about it, so it got to them. So when they came in, they started looking for it. They turned upside down the whole apartment.

Elizabeth: This was before mother went in hiding.

Irvin: Yeah.

Elizabeth: Before mother went in hiding.

Irvin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Before who went in hiding?

Elizabeth: Mother and brother.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Irvin: And they looked for it everywhere, upside down, in the apartment, they didn't find the gold coins. The gold coins were there all right, but they didn't find them. What did I do with the gold coins? We had a grandfather...

Elizabeth: Grandfather clock.

Irvin: Grandfather clock. The grandfather clock, it says on it how we lived. [unclear 0:29:21] From day to day, we had to improvise. So I made holes in the weights and substituted the holes with gold coins.

Elizabeth: Anyhow, he was the supporter of the family because at this time nobody already worked, and you had to live somehow.

Interviewer: And he did a trading in gold coins?

Elizabeth: He did it. He was then 17, 16, 17 years old. He was really the supporter of the family.

Irvin: I was trading and doing – but, what I was – the reason support came from it was since I was brought up in the factory so I was being taught. I picked up some knowledge of it, how do you make the shoes and how to create a profit and so on.

Interviewer: Elizabeth, add to the story.

Elizabeth: No, to his story, I cannot...at the moment, I cannot add because I know that a big ghetto was formed, that's what he told me, and that people were selected. The older people and the children who were selected were dead.

Interviewer: Selected for the ghetto?

Elizabeth: From ghetto.

Interviewer: From the ghetto.

Elizabeth: They were called on a roll call to the marketplace and they were...to the left were the people who were unable; to the right, the people who were strong, young. And these people were to be sent later we found out to work, while the children and unable disabled people, older people were

sent away. At this time, nobody knew where. So between others...and then they found the right...this is...I am telling you what Irvin told me.

Interviewer: Yes.

Elizabeth: To the right the young people, 18, 30 'til 30, 40, maybe 50 even, but strong people. The children were put in one place. Irvin did not want to...this was after his mother and a brother was already taken away. He has a vague memory of it. He knows that he came...the hiding place, and they were taken away.

Interviewer: The hiding place that he built?

Interviewee: Yeah, was already discovered.

Interviewer: They hid there, but they were discovered.

Elizabeth: Discovered, yeah.

Interviewer: Someone turned them in or...

Irvin: Somebody turned it in.

Elizabeth: It could be a neighbor. You don't know.

Irvin: Yes, a neighbor.

Interviewer: But he came back looking for them and they were gone.

Elizabeth: They were gone. He was with the brother that is now alive here. It is a long story because he lost him during the war, at the end of the war, and he found him later, which is another story, but he has at least one brother.

Interviewer: Yes.

Elizabeth: Now—

Interviewer: But a ghetto was formed...when was the ghetto formed?

Elizabeth: Must have been '41, '40...'40 the big ghetto.

Irvin: Yeah.

Interviewer: And then selections were made from the ghetto. And he was the one—

Elizabeth: And Irvin was sent to the munition factory which was concentration camp Hassock. This was after two years I came from another camp. Do you want me to say it?

Interviewer: Yes. So why don't we shift in here from the outbreak of the war to this camp.

Elizabeth: I cannot tell you day by day, but I remember all. This is what I remember. The Germans came in, in the town, they came to our courtyard, started to call people with very loud voices. "Bring us water. Women, bring us water," to wash. So we had to bring the water bowls and water, and they washed. They undressed and they washed. They were the [unintelligible 0:34:08]. And they were treated us right away very brusque, very, very...in an ugly way. Then after they washed, they came from one apartment to the other and looked for men's clothing, for men's picture. My father's picture was on the wall. "Where is he?" They wanted to demand we deliver to them. In our case, the father is not alive anymore. "You are lying. Where did you hide him?" But it was very, very harsh, very...you could see right away who is the person in charge. They were in charge. My mother wanted me to leave Lodz, my city. "Go together with the young people. You will go on the Russian side, and there you will be safe. Maybe from Russia, you will be able to go out of Europe." So like all the other people my age, we ran away, we ran. And I found myself close to a little city, I don't remember even the name, and from there the people were taken to a concentration camp, but it was not as bad concentration camp as the Hassock.

Interviewer: As the other—

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Interviewer: That's the one to which—

Elizabeth: It also was a munition factory, but it was a smaller munition factory, but we lived in very bad condition. One was called...we called it the zoo because this one must have been an old warehouse like, in my imagination, it would be three-story high, and there were shelves in the middle, there were shelves. Tremendous shelves like a room, this size of a room. There were, I believe, six in the height. And there where the girls were sleeping on the boards. Someone had a little bit straw, and the

straw was very, very dirty. I remember when I was sent to a concentration camp, a week later, we're sent every day for roll call. And one day, something was itching, I put away my sleeve, and there was a lice with a cross on the bag, which I never saw a lice in my life. But right away I was informed that this is a louse that brings the typhoid. Sure enough, a week later I was taken to the so-called hospital. The hospital was an old stable with shelves on the wall, about seven feet wide. And there were people laid, women in one room, one part of the stable and men in the other. We were laying one next to the other, no blankets, not a thing. I had a coat from home which I put my feet in the sleeves and cover myself always in a squatted position because it was too small to cover me all. And I remember that I was delirious. While I was delirious, I saw myself...we were taken by trucks, and I saw very vividly the way back. You know, like you turned the movie backwards, you know, rerun.

Interviewer: Yes.

Elizabeth: So this I saw me sitting on the truck and going back the same way. This was during my typhoid. It happened the day before I went to the hospital because the concentration camp was intact before we came. It was a selection. What was the selection? The Germans came to the hospital, and so who was very weak, who was delirious, who they saw that will not survive, they took him and threw on the truck, threw on the truck. Then for fun, they took condoms, blew them up, and attached them like balloons. This was their fun. And they took the people away, and living people they put in ditches. This was what we found out later.

Interviewer: You mean, they buried people alive?

Elizabeth: Buried people alive. They took a live people and threw them in. Now, the selection happened a day before I went in. After I was released, I don't remember how long I was there. Friends tried to send me some food, a piece of bread. I was hungry all the time. And funny thing that

the people who didn't have any outside help, I mean, did not eat, I couldn't eat what was given to us, one daily soup, but terrible soup. This people who couldn't eat it during the two weeks, more or less, it was two weeks' stay. This people survived. The people who had some food...this is a paradox, this people did not survive. The people who hungered survived typhoid. Anyhow...yeah, when I came the first day to the concentration camp...I have to go back because chronologically I cannot remember. They gave us...they brought us huge kettles with soup, the soup was gray. You did not know what was in it. Then when we started to eat, we saw that it was...these were beets in peels, unpeeled, we saw. This was the soup. It was really not edible. And the—

Irvin: Like liver sauce.

Elizabeth: Okay. But it looked awful. It tasted awful. And I ate it. And some girls, about 12 girls came to me and said, "How can you eat it?" First, came one, then the second. I said, "If I will not eat it, I will not survive. I have to eat it." "Oh, we want to be with you. You will survive." And the 12 girls, we stayed together. They wanted to be with me. Some unfortunately couldn't take it and did not survive.

Interviewer: Elizabeth, this camp was a munitions plant?

Elizabeth: It was a munition plant.

Interviewer: Not a large camp?

Elizabeth: It was...no, it was a small camp. It had three...if I remember, one was...they made some...produce some gas, and the people who came to the shower once a month were completely yellow. I found my school friend, a young man. We recognized each other. He was completely

yellow, so were the other people because this was from the gas. And they did not survive. And there was another. I don't remember what they did in the other so-called department in another place, but there was one, Skarżysko, this was in Skarżysko. When we came first to the factory, we were putting triggers to a conveyor. With a woman master, you would call her foreman, but it was really more. She was the master of your life and death. It was a Polish woman who was the girlfriend of one of the Germans. And we were put on a conveyor machine. And we were supposed to...

Interviewer: Oh, yes.

Elizabeth: Because two of us.

Interviewer: We've got plenty of time. Okay. All right.

Irvin: This is a big problem we had with the Germans. We were making shells not out of brass or copper. We were making shells out of steel, and that of course was pulled by the machines, was stretched. And—

Elizabeth: It was formed, I think.

Irvin: And we were tracking. So the girl pulled out had to look for a small little track.

Elizabeth: Okay. But the poor girls did not ever have to do with shells. What did I know about a defective shell or not? Did I ever see one? Never. Of course, we let through bad shells, but I show you only what persistence, perseverance, and inhumanity can do. We were called to the master, really master of your life and death, and he started to beat us between

the eyes, in the nose. "You, Jewish swines. You do it. You sabotaged the work." We were not even told how a good shell looks or how a bad shell looks. We didn't know. But right after this we knew, right after this beating. We were so terribly beaten. This was the first day at work.

Interviewer: First day.

Elizabeth: First day at work.

Interviewer: And this was done by a German?

Elizabeth: By a German.

Interviewer: Whose girlfriend was the kind of foreman?

Elizabeth: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: So there was death from illness, typhus, starvation, but you all—

Elizabeth: Right. We were not in a death camp.

Interviewer: Yes.

Elizabeth: But every day death occurred. I mean, not death, normal death by starvation or by old age. Only by killing. Let's say that there were men who were rolling away the good shells. It was quite a heavy box, and

they were rolling it away. At this time, men wore cuffs in the pants. And one shell fell out in a cuff. And the man was taken away and killed right away. Because with the one shell without bullet, he would kill all the German army. You see how ridiculous it all was? They were looking for an excuse to kill. And I remember...

Interviewer: Were there only woman that worked in this plant?

Elizabeth: No. But we lived...the women lived separate, the men lived separate, and we came together to work. So I said the men were doing the other work. Irvin, let's say, was working at this time in another camp, in another factory. But this was hassock, and this was hassock, only in another place.

Irvin: The same factory.

Elizabeth: And he was working on machine that measured the powder for the bullets, but he was held in very high esteem by the Germans because it was up to him if the machines worked or not. He could say the machine is broke, which was really not. He made it stop. So they really had to humor him and he was known. You ask me if I knew him. I didn't know him, but I knew of him. This was the man who saves people.

Interviewer: You knew of him even when you were working in the munitions plant?

Elizabeth: This was when I came to the other munition factory to where he was working. He was known as the person who saves people, who helps people.

Interviewer: Irvin, were the conditions in your camp pretty much the same they were in Elizabeth's at that time?

Irvin: Yeah. Ever since how I got into it. When I first came to the camp, I was given work in building.

Elizabeth: Carrying cement on his back.

Irvin: Deliver bricks and whatnot. Hard work but the winter is hard work. The one good thing with it, you [unintelligible 0:47:07] the hard work. And I will continue on with it, but I had to switch over for a moment because when we're talking about the ghetto and how we started to make...

Elizabeth: Selections.

Irvin: ...selections, one day when the selections were made, I found myself in a section of town where my parents used to live before were married. It was a very poor section of town, dirty, and poor section of town, and they were making selection of a very good section, and I knew the people over there because while we lived over there and I was a young boy, I was helping out with watching the kids. I was getting paid for it.

Elizabeth: Baby-sitting.

Irvin: Baby-sitting. And when I was over the street there was a bridge and suddenly, I saw three motorcycles arrive, and we learned to recognize the regular Germans. Gestapo, they had different hats, and the –

Elizabeth: SS.

Irvin: – Wermacht which meant with the army.

Elizabeth: And SS, storm trooper.

Irvin: Yeah, the SS, but that was regular army, Wermacht, standard army. It's important. It was very, very important. Because from there we didn't expect anything bad, you know, you had men talking, we said professor, doctor, we were not addressing them themselves.

Elizabeth: Each other.

Irvin: All people with education and so when they came, they started to scream, but that scream I don't think there's another language with the German language that you can put out a scream like that, which was out. So all Jews started to walk out, and people who walked out they had little children, I don't know, four or five years old, maybe younger. So they had the children in the wheel...

Elizabeth: In the carriages, in carriages.

Irvin: In the carriages as we take to the houses.

Elizabeth: So they were younger children, yeah.

Irvin: Yeah, so they must have been two, three years old.

Elizabeth: Younger.

Irvin: Children. They came out in those carriages. And when we heard the scream, the parents go home, leave the children out, and parents were told to go home. So the parents went home.

Elizabeth: No, the parents did not go home. You don't remember. In presence of the parents, what they did.

Interviewer: What did they do?

Irvin: They just individually, one by one, one of the soldiers walked by to the carriage, picked up a child by the legs, and walked to the wall, and split his head against the wall.

Elizabeth: I know how it was because it happened in our city too, and they did not take the children from carriages only. They took the children from mothers' arm, infants, and they did the same thing.

Interviewer: Kill the children.

Elizabeth: They killed the children but very brutally. They took them by the legs and hit the head against the wall.

Interviewer: This was in the ghetto, not in the camp.

Elizabeth: No. This was in Lodz, was ghetto, after I left. So I don't know much about the ghetto. This was after the war.

Irvin: But that was in the ghetto.

Elizabeth: Yeah. But what I wanted to say...I come back to it, that I told you I wanted to tell you about the dehumanization.

Interviewer: Yes.

Elizabeth: The dehumanization of the Jews started the first day. This was the first screeching "Bring us the water." The next day was a poster a Jew cannot walk on the street. Only has to walk not on the sidewalk, has to walk on the street. Then was, a Jew has to greet a German, and when he greets by taking of the hat, he is hit because "What? Am I your friend that you're greeting me?" But you had to do it. Sometimes a German gave you a cigarette case and said, "You want a cigarette?" He gave you a cigarette case. When you reached for it, he slammed your fingers in the cigarette case. This was silver usually. This was in style then, the cigarette case. And so day by day something new came. Then they came out that we have to wear arm bands. After a few weeks, I believe two weeks of arm bands, another decree came out. You have to wear star of David. The star of David, I think, I don't remember anymore if it was on the left or right side. I know only that it was front and back. And then when we came to the concentration camp and I told this to my grandson who was sitting and crying. We were permitted to go once a month to shower. And we were so dirty. When I was in the hospital and put my fingernails which were long because I didn't have scissors in the straw in which people were laying and starving and dying, I just had under my nails hundreds of lice. It was terrible. And so we were permitted to go to the shower in winter, barefoot, in the snow, very cold.

Interviewer: How often? Once a week? Once a month?

Elizabeth: Once a month. We tried to keep our hair clean by washing it with the soap. I don't know how you would call it. This was not a bar of soap. This was the soap that we used to lubricate the machinery. And we didn't have hot water so we used the coffee because it was also from beets, only it was very dark. We washed our hair in it, but it did not help. Our normal work after our 12 hours of work was to look through our clothes, and all the lice were sitting in the seams, and squeeze them. And there was no shame already. Everybody did it. So while we were in the shower, the Germans came and they made vulgar remarks about the women bathing. We did not bathe, of course, with the men, but they could come and look at us. So this has this and this has that breast and this has a round back. This was so dehumanizing, but it did not already affect us because we were not human, but what I remember the other day, there was a town idiot. This was in Skarżysko, before we came to Częstochowa, and he was in charge of the latrine. You know what a latrine is. There were many holes, and every time he was walking in this shit, excuse me. He was walking in it. He was wearing the rubber boots, and he was looking at us that we were squatting, and I think...I forgot it all the years, I forgot it. It came to me last week. And I think that this was the last straw or one of the last ones. We were not human. We had no feelings.

Irvin: When you talk about straw...the use of straw was too good for us. The use for the purpose of straw is for mattresses, they used wood shavings.

Elizabeth: I remember once in Skarżysko beside this place that the women lived like in zoo, what I told you, I did not live there. Thank God. Also there was not enough place in the zoo. So we lived in barracks. There were 60 women to one little room. There were four bunks from raw wood, the unshaved wood, and on this we got made out of paper. They had sacks, but this was woven paper, and we were to go there and there was straw and to fill it. I don't remember if it was a clean straw or not. The lice came anyhow, there's no question about it. So we went—

Irvin: Worse than the lice were bedbugs.

Elizabeth: Bedbugs, yeah.

Irvin: We called them the...

Elizabeth: The red invasion.

Irvin: Yeah. Wherever you slept, they were just falling on you and eating you and blood was surrounding you because when you kill the bedbugs it just...

Elizabeth: And it stunk. Oh, God, it stunk. So we lived in the barracks, and we had...each of us in turn had to take care of cleaning the barrack. The bunks were four stories high, four bed bunks. As we were not human, as I told you, let's say, Daphne was a girl who was dying, and she picked up the lice from her and she threw it down. We were there or we weren't there. And the lice were still alive. They walked wherever they wanted. And you couldn't even be mad at her. She didn't know anymore what's going on, and we didn't want to tell that she is sick because she would be killed right away. I remember one time somebody, some Jew, committed something terrible, probably stole a piece of bread or stole something, I don't know. Probably not...he didn't kill no one, that I know, and he was hung. And the Jewish policemen...the Germans chose so and so many people to be Jewish policemen, and they had to listen to the Germans to be bad to us. I remember when there was the hanging. We already knew about it. They came to the barracks with whips and, "Everybody out, everybody out." And we had to go out in the...there was a big lot where the gallows was made, and we were supposed to stand and watch. And who didn't put the head up, the eyes up, was so badly beaten with whip—

Interviewer: You were made to watch the hanging?

Elizabeth: Huh?

Interviewer: You were made to watch the hanging?

Elizabeth: Yeah, the hanging, yeah. And God forbid if they can caught you the Germans or the Jewish police that we didn't have our eyes up. But you know what, it didn't make any difference on us. We already didn't have feelings. We tried not to look but to look, so we look. So we were not human at this point already. Then after two years of this, I think we were sent to Częstochowa where Irvin worked, to the bigger factory. We got there, and on top of the factory was a huge room, huge, but still it was not for 1500 girls, and we were posted there. While we were in the barracks if we needed to go out at night to the bathroom, to the latrine, we could not. We were not permitted to go out. So we sat on the windowsill and did what we had to do. Or we urinated in the can in which we took soup. This was nothing to us. You squint your eyes, but it was nothing to us. In this big room, we couldn't do it, and it was just terrible, it was just terrible. At the end of this huge room was the supervisor, a German doc. We called her Frau doctor. I don't see that she was a doctor. This is what she was called. She entertained always the German. She had, you know, blankets were around her bed, and she had a corner there, so it was like a little room in the huge room where the 1500 girls where. And the cook was our very good friend. My friends and me, we shared a bunk. And he, because he was a cook and the Germans, the soldiers, the guards and so on needed something from him, they let him...they didn't look very much at him. So he came to us, brought us sometimes a little bit food. And one night, he stayed there while the German boyfriend of this Frau doctor came. What do we do? This cannot happen. He cannot be in the crowd of the girls. We put him under our dirty blanket. We were in bed, on the bunk, and we put him there so that the German will go to his girlfriend, and he will be safe, and we will be safe. He probably would get nothing because they needed him, and we would be punished very severely. And after he already went there in the corner, then he ran out, but he was helping us very much.

He was helping us, and he was helping us in the moment. We did not know that he was a Jewish man, that he was in the underground, had connection with the underground, but at the last moment before the liberation, he went out in the street and saw that the Germans were gone, and he already came with an arm band that's militia and had the gun, so the underground was in touch with him. Later we found out about it.

Interviewer: Same bunk always?

Elizabeth: There were two bunks together, four bunks up. So on each bunk were two girls. When we came in, we got blankets, horse blankets. That was the time they were out. So in order to keep the torn blanket together, we somehow got... anyhow I talk about me...got the straw mattress in which we stuffed straw and sew it to the torn blanket. So it was very hard, because it was very hard but at least it covered us. There was no change of linens. There were no linens. There was dirt. There was terrible dirt, and we really didn't care. But after the war when I met Irvin and we decided to go together, I needed to go to have my hair cut because I had so many...yeah. I used the acetone and we all did it, acetone that we cleaned the machinery, poured on our heads, so at least there we didn't have lice, but there were the eggs. And I had to go to have my hair shortened after the war. I didn't want to have the eggs. I was ashamed to go to a barber. I was ashamed to go to a barber. Today, I say, "I was an idiot. Why was I ashamed? Did I do it?" I was not...again, I tell you, I was not a human being.

Interviewer: You believed yourself that you were not a human being?

Elizabeth: Yeah. I had no pride, no feeling. Gradually, thank God, it came back. Thank God. But at this point...you see, we were not really liberated of all this. Yeah. By the way, you asked me if I got beaten one time. I got beaten so severely one time that 'til today I have...my vertebrae is

degenerated...because...and I don't want to go in detail what it was. Thirty girls were called to come Sunday. This Sunday was our...we worked from nightshift coming...from dayshift coming to the nightshift, so that means we had one night free, one day free, and then the night. But we were called Sunday to come to work. Something happened that was not our fault. It was unfortunately one of our fellow Jews helped the meister, let me tell about it, to steal a sacred dress coat. The meister needed money. He wanted to sell the coat. He sent the Jew to take the coat, wrap it, and take it out. We saw how he carried it out. Suddenly the SS came. "Who stole the sacred dress coat? You?" "No." "You?" "No." All the 30 girls, no. "If you will not say, every 10th girl will be killed." Of course, we were frightened, but we could not say that we saw him taken out on the German order. How could we say it? And then they called to policeman, bring a hassock, a chair like this, only lower. We had to kneel, put the front of our body on the chair, and a policeman was sitting on our neck, and they started to beat us with sticks, broomsticks, which were very hard, and two masters on one behind. So some girls were crying, "Please, let me go. I didn't do it. Please, let me go." I apparently am a very hard person. I said, "A German will not hear me crying." I didn't say it. They beat one after the other, all the 30 girls, but very, very severe. Cried, some cried, and they were put aside. After the 30 were through, they took us again. And then I don't remember if they beat all of us or this one didn't cry with a hose, rubber hose, full hose, not empty hose. It was not the hose. It was a...how do you call it? Like a rubber hose, only full.

Irvin: Truncheon.

Interviewer: Truncheon.

Elizabeth: And they beat me so badly that I fainted. I remember that I was woken up by a bucket of water thrown on me, and they still beat me. I was beaten the most. There was another girl who was skinny, maybe she was beaten as much as I. I was not as skinny, and it didn't show on her, but I know that when we went to the bathroom, latrine, I had to take off my

pants to show my girls that because they wanted to see the map that was on my behind. Believe it or not, I did not get a penny from the Germans. I got a thousand dollar for my lost teeth. My papers were this heavy from the lawyers, and they decided, German doctor, here in Nashville, German doctors here in Nashville decided that I am 25% invalid. The Germans decided that so and so many years past, so I am only 15% invalid because I am getting better. And if I would like to come to Germany to the court, I might get something, pension or sum. You see, not in their life I would go to Germany or to Poland. I don't want their money. I don't want anything because they cannot pay me for anything. So...and then one day came the liberation. Really it was not liberation. Irvin worked on the same department as I. I was helping myself in order not to starve with sewing for the German women, I was sewing for them. And at night, I was dreaming I was a designer, and I was dreaming a design of a dress. And in the morning they brought all dresses, and from two dresses make me one. So I dreamt this style and I made it for them. You asked where I had the needle, the thread. The thread I stole. I stole from the packages that the munitions...the bullets were packed. This was a woven belt, and I stole the belt. And then I pulled the thread out and I had the thread to sew. The German didn't ask me from where I had the thread. But they gave me additional piece of bread. They gave me something brought from home to eat which was fine. It was not the price of the dress that I made, but it was additional food. So this helped me really to survive. And there was a moment in my life and my bunkmate, we both were working very hard to sew. She was a dressmaker. And we worked very hard, and we had a girl who when we could afford to buy because what we ever had, it was not much, we traded with the Polish people. And she cooked for us outside in the pit. She cooked some soup for us and she ate with us. Anyhow, after the work, all the girls that we used to help came to me to work. And at 4 o'clock they said, "This is enough. You are going for a walk. You and your husband go for a walk, and we will be cleaning the house and we will..." You know the friendship stayed which was wonderful, after the war. But the liberation itself was not a hooray. The German did disappear. We saw that something was going on. We saw through the windows that the fire is all around far, far away, but fire, fire, something going on, and we didn't know what. But we saw that the Germans were very agitated. Something's going on. And suddenly one

by one, we didn't see them anymore. But the Ukrainians, how was it called...how were they called?

Irvin: [unintelligible 1:13:55]

Elizabeth: No, no, no. They were Ukrainians guard, they were the ones that ran away from the Russian and came over to the...I forgot—

Irvin: The Germans.

Elizabeth: —what was the army called. Anyhow, they were—

Irvin: [unintelligible 1:14:09]

Elizabeth: Yeah. They were even worse than the Germans. I mean, they didn't have business to kill us, but they were bad people. And they were still on guard, and we started to hide to go to...we took our belongings which was this much under the arm and looking where to hide in the basement, and there is a guard, you have to hide behind the post. And they also disappeared eventually. And it was already night, I saw Irvin walking with a bunch of people. And he came to me and asked me, "Do you have something to eat?" And I said, "No." He said, "We have a bread." And they were about 20 people for one bread. And the bread was very bad bread but doesn't matter. This was something to fill—

Irvin: With a loaf of bread.

Elizabeth: —the stomach, yeah. And he hid us in a German bathroom. We didn't know what's going on at this time. Then Irvin went to the kitchen, left us

there. He went to the kitchen, and he saw that the friend of ours prepared kettles of coffee. I don't remember what coffee this, probably was not real coffee, maybe was; it was hot drink. So he already knew that the Russians are in. He was already in town, the friend, and came back as I told you, with this friend. You went later on. And there was not...the Russian did not come to liberate us. We opened the gate....We stayed in touch as long as she was alive. She was living in Israel after the war. But people who could not make decision for ourselves, for me, Irvin made the decision, maybe I would be there too, but Irvin said, "Never to be in the beginning, never at the end, always in the middle." So we were not there.

Irvin: We had a chance to change our mind which way to move.

Elizabeth: In the last moment, there was one German who was an honest man, I think. He ran into a magazine where the bread was stored, and he threw the bread in the masses. He threw breads, and who caught it got bread. And this was the bread that Irvin had for the 20 people. So when we walked out, it really was not a hooray, we are free. There was no joy. There was no feeling.

Interviewer: Now, tell me again when that was?

Elizabeth: This was the night of January 16 or 17, '45.

Interviewer: Of 1945.

Elizabeth: Yeah. And this is our liberation day. This is what we really celebrate. This is a new chapter of our life.

Interviewer: Can you add anything from his story of this period of time?

Irvin: I would like to but we interrupted...I interrupted something before. It was German army people who came with bicycles.

Elizabeth: Not bicycles, motorcycles.

Irvin: Motorcycles. And they killed the little children. Since then I had a constant nightmare, I felt that I am responsible, that I didn't do nothing to save the children.

Interviewer: Irvin, you saw the Germans kill the children?

Elizabeth: So did I.

Irvin: Right.

Interviewer: You did too?

Elizabeth: Yeah. But I want something to add—

Interviewer: And you had a nightmare?

Irvin: Yeah. Because I feel that I should have done something, scream, jump, I was strong. I hate I didn't do something.

Elizabeth: Something very important which you didn't say, how you saved your brother. This is very important. Say it.

Elizabeth: When Irvin was put to decide to go to work, his brother was taken to the other side to go for death. And Irvin said, "No, I will not let my brother go." And he ran to be together with him. And then the Germans started to beat him and said, "No. You go there." And he said, "No, I am going here." And then one of the...was it a meister also or what?

Irvin: It was like this, they wanted us to catch the last thing that they can get from us, they wanted to get...so the German officer was standing and who were passing by. And he was deciding yet what to do with us because there was a track, the last track, that was supposed to go to the cemetery. So there were some older people or something that were sent to the cemetery. And I saw what's happening, so I put my brother in front of me. So I would see what happens to him, then I will decide what to do.

Elizabeth: This was before he was put on the other side, but you don't remember it.

Irvin: So I came here. There were watches in a basket, new watches.

Elizabeth: Everybody that was passing had to try—

Irvin: So watches, gold rings, diamonds, anything of value had to be thrown into the basket. So when I came over...so he says, my brother had to go to the track, the German. So I said, "I will go with him." So he said, "Do you know where you're going?" "I don't care." "You go to the death. Nobody is going to come back alive from the track." So in the middle of the market stood the German who was responsible for the whole transaction, where Jews sending here. And I recognized him because I

used to go with an uncle of mine. I used to go and paint German homes, the newer SR. And I used to paint in the apartment of that German...what was his name?

Elizabeth: What's the difference?

Irvin: Yeah. Anyhow...so when he said I have to go with my brother, I went to this German, and I told him my brother is strong. He's 13 years old. But he's strong. He can work.

Elizabeth: He was younger. Apparently, the German got the change of heart and he probably had a child his age.

Irvin: So he says to me, "Okay. Go back in line." So at the moment when he said go back in line, I did not go into the line of people that were throwing the money, the gold, the watches into the...

Elizabeth: Basket.

Irvin: ...basket. I went into the line of the people that passed already the basket, so I did not have to throw anything in.

Elizabeth: But say about your brother how you saved him from the German.

Irvin: And while I was there, arguing with the officer, the German, that same night before they killed many, many Jews, and he came and interfered the SS who killed children.

Elizabeth: There were 13 children.

Irvin: With us, 13 children from our city of 120,000 Jews, with those 13 children
[unintelligible 1:24:12]

Elizabeth: Used for work.

Interviewer: They're what?

Elizabeth: These few children I can use for work. So thank to Irvin that he stood like that and these people told me about it later.

Interviewer: Now, let me ask you, he said when he started telling the story it was the Germans killing children and his nightmare of not being able to do anything, and you moved him to tell a story about saving his brother where he could do something.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Interviewer: But is it not true that most of the time there was nothing either of you could do to help other people?

Elizabeth: That's true, that's true. But this happened...so this German who was standing by, the one who said a few children I could use, apparently had a change of heart because maybe he had a child of this age. These were children 10 to 13 something like this. And thank to...this that Irvin wanted to go with his brother. It happened that he saved 13 children. And this I heard not from him. This I heard before I met him.

Interviewer: I see. Both of you were in what might be called slave labor camp.

Elizabeth: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: Yes. Did you hear about the death camps? Did you hear what was happening to the Jewish people?

Elizabeth: I think at the end we heard something. I think that it came from the underground. I don't know, I don't know but I heard something.

Irvin: I did hear how...we were being sent to work, people to different camps, and one which is to the railroad, work at the railroad. And I had an uncle who went also with the railroad, and then they came in decision that all the people now go back into their little ghetto.

Elizabeth: Concentrated, after the selection.

Irvin: After selection, after we were sent our way, the little ghetto, the ghetto this part of town was the worst shape, the houses, no running water and things like that. So they stuffed them all into a little ghetto, and with this little ghetto, I met a friend, I don't remember his name...

Elizabeth: Doesn't matter.

Irvin: Yeah. A friend, we went to school, and he was sent to death camp. And he told me how they killed the Jews in the death camp and how they killed my mother, and he saw it with his own eyes. And he ran

away from that death camp in a special way. You see, they were killing so many people that they had to make a place for every people, for all the materials, let's say the shoes because the shoes they throw it away and there's a mountain of shoes. So they come to the dresses, throwing this mountain of dresses. What they will do, nobody knew. And they sent women to go this way and the men this way, and to take with them a bar of soap and a towel. They're going to have a shower. And they went to a building which looked like a shower too. The only trouble was, instead of water from the shower heads, came out gas.

Elizabeth: Yeah, but this you heard afterwards, not at this time.

Irvin: Yeah. Now, I say this is what we heard in the ghetto.

Elizabeth: No, no, no.

Irvin: My friend told me this.

Elizabeth: I am sorry. This we heard afterwards. We did not know. But I remember you asked me if we knew what happened to the people. This we don't know. I remember only that one time I was taken out by one of the Polish meisters out to his house to sew for his wife. So they took me away from the machine and got me there. And this sound I never will forget. I heard the ta-ta-ta-ta of the train and I heard but very subdued because it was far ahead but thousands of people must have said, "[Shma Israel, shma Israel1:29:48]," which means "Hear, O Israel, what happens to us." And this I never...this I never will be able...as I forgot many other things...this one thing I never, never can forget. I hear it constantly in my ears.

Interviewer: Sounds coming from railcars.

Elizabeth: Hmm?

Interviewer: Where were the sounds coming from?

Elizabeth: From the trains.

Interviewer: From the trains.

Elizabeth: But I did not know that they are going to be eliminated, that it will be such a scientific design. Murder!

Irvin: No other people, no other nation would have been able to perform what the Germans did.

Elizabeth: Today, we see that there are other Holocausts, but they are not this premeditated, scientific premeditated. These were the scientists, educated people.

Interviewer: Yes.

Elizabeth: You see, you asked me about my education. My education was the concentration camps. This was my education.

Interviewer: What happened to both of you at liberation? How did the Russians treat you?

Elizabeth: Oh, the Russians treated us okay. First of all when we walked out, Irvin who knew the city, took us to a—

Interviewer: Now, what city were you in?

Elizabeth: Częstochowa. This was the hassock in Częstochowa.

Interviewer: At liberation. All right.

Elizabeth: So we went to...he took us to a...what was it...a former what? This was at this time when he took us, the Germans left it as a German hospital. And he took all the group to the building, and every few people took one room there, and Irvin took us in the kitchen, because when there was a stove, we could cook. Some funny things happened too because he started to bring food from the...he knew where the restaurants where in the city, so he suspected that there would be food, and he really brought to this kitchen. We were there at this time four or six of us, I don't remember, but there was also a bunk bed, four of us I think. He brought some potatoes. He brought some synthetic cheese, some marinated mushrooms. That's what he found. And I cooked it all together. I did not know how to cook. And sorry to say that Irvin who was hungry did not eat it because I mixed it all together, and I did not know how to cook. I had to ask how long do you cook an egg to be soft because when I left home at this time the girls were not permitted to go to the kitchen, so I didn't know how to cook and during the war I did not have the experience. We ate what we got.

Interviewer: Did you tell me how the two of you got together?

Elizabeth: So eventually as I told you we were in the kitchen the first night, all four of us. And then I don't know the next day there were nine people in two rooms in an apartment that Irvin found. It was in that apartment, the Germans left, the food was on the table. Apparently, there was dessert during dinner. Irvin told us not to touch the food. It could be poison in it. We found some...there were beds. In the bedroom were two beds and the other room were beds too, so the nine people saw that we will sleep there. The windows were broken by the bombardment. And the men took the coconut, the runners, and they nailed them to the windows. They cut them, they nailed them, so it was not as cold. But eventually we all nine found ourselves in the kitchen in front of the stove, a coal stove, sleeping the night on mattresses. We brought the mattresses to the kitchen. It was so cold that we brought the mattresses to the kitchen, and of course we didn't change like this, so we... Then the next day the janitor went to the Russian headquarter and said, "Here are some people in the apartment. They were in the apartment, which we did." And the Russian came and said we needed for Russian soldiers, officers, and we had to move. Irvin went out in the street and met a friend. And the friend said, "You know, there's a couple, that they have additional room." And the Russian...

Irvin: Two apartments.

Elizabeth: ...no...additional room, and the Russian wants to take it. And they would rather see you there. These were not Jewish people, of course. They'd rather see you there than the Russians, and so we got a room and a kitchen, and I was the housewife for the three men, these were three friends, he and his two friends, and then one day, if you want to hear it, you really want to hear it?

Interviewer: I'm told that we're out of time, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth: Okay.

Interviewer: And I have a number of additional questions. I think we're going to have to book another hour sometime for me to finish, because there are a lot of different things including what you've learned from this and I haven't even had a chance to ask you about—

Elizabeth: I told you that this is really two interviews.

Interviewer: That's right. So let's schedule another hour to finish and I will remember it. Yes, I do want to hear that.

Elizabeth: Good.