

Dorothy Harding Testimony Transcript

I was a child going to school, enjoy it, having family, having parents, which was a thrill. They guide me in the right place, which I am 'preciated today, which means to me a lot, but didn't last too long. Hitler came to power and took away everything. I was born in Wloszczowa on March the 14th 1925. They moved to Czestochowa - I was not quite a year old. That's why, but still, this is my town where I was born.

And from Wloszczowa, I grow up. I grow up just twelve and a half years and I was working because I was working by the Germans. They took us and we have to work. And from there on, I was working about two, three years. All of a sudden came that we're in a ghetto. When I got back from work, I didn't found nobody where we used to live. It was a ghetto on a street – Garncarska Street. And over there I found my parents and I was with them. But every day the Germans came. They picked me up and took me to work. I was working quite a while. One day, I didn't go back home. I was staying put in this concentration camp. It was HASAG-Pelcery. And over there I was working on a field, was named, Augenschein. I was looking through the bullets – which one is good and which one has a hole. I have to part – segregate – them. And this was my job. I was there for a few years in HASAG.

Then I was sent to Ravensbrück, Germany. I was in Ravensbrück about eight days. We were staying in the morning, about two o'clock in the morning for an *appell*. One woman was missing. We were staying the whole night 'till they found her. She was asleep and she wasn't on the *appell*. That's why we were punished to stay outside freezing, no clothes on it to keep us warm – nothing. But somehow, we survived staying in the lines. It was a long, long line. All of a sudden, comes a German and I recognized him. He was the leader in HASAG-Pelcery. He came to me close and he said, "*Was machst du hier?*" I didn't answer him. Why? Because next to me was staying the leader from Auschwitz, this was a woman, and she was holding something like a stick and if she would hit me, I don't know if I would be here. Somehow I survived and this German sent me to Leipzig.

And in Leipzig, it was a different thing. They gave me every morning, a half loaf of bread. But this didn't satisfied me. I am still away from my father and my two brothers what I left in Poland. But I can nothing do to it. That's the way it was. But being in Leipzig, when I came to Leipzig, they send me to a different camp that was on other side. And I was there, and I was there and I couldn't eat. I accumulated those two half loaf of breads. But it was no place there then to hide. Then the leader from the barrack came to me. "Look, here are inspections. They are coming every day, every second day and checking what goes on here. If it's clean and if it's everything in order." She said to me, "You cannot have this bread here because if they will check and they will find this, you are not gonna be punished, I am gonna be punished. I am responsible for it." And what to do? I gave the bread away, I gave away. And this was the end.

Then I went to work. I was working also in a place where I controlled the bullets – the same thing – which one is good and which one is bad. The bad I have put it in a different barrel, and the good one - different. When the barrel was full, I have to write it on how many bullets is in the barrel. When I wrote it on, and this barrels went to Czestochowa to the washery, you know, to wash this. Sure enough, my brother was working on this field. And when he took it out, and on the top was the little piece of paper – how many bullets are in it – he recognized my handwriting. But was is good. He can nothing do. But and please for them is a big help, that I am alive. This was enlightening.

From Poland, from HASAG-Pelcery, I was sent in September, 1944. Being there, it wasn't easy for me to get away from everybody. But it was dear to me. I couldn't do nothing. Working at the table. Looking through, segregating the bullets, the good bullets in a different barrel and the bad in a different barrel. Fine. All of a sudden, I looked in the corner, is sitting what is watching us. That was from Schlonsk. I don't know how to say this. She was from Schlonsk, and she was watching us - not to talk to us outsiders. Because at my table, was working from outside Leipzig people coming in to work. And we were Halflings, you know, it's not allowed to mix with them. Sure enough, they brought me even food. She didn't see it. Fine, I didn't need the food, I didn't want it - the food, but it was a nice gesture, you know to bring. She is sitting in the corner and eating her lunch and in her lunch, was a salted piece of herring. It was the top from the head. She was through and she throw it away in the garbage can. And I was watching her when she will move away – go someplace. And I went to this garbage can, and I picked up this herring. And this herring, I picked it up and wrapped it in paper and took it to my barrack. And every morning, before I left to work, I took a lick of this herring and holds me. It was a not nice thing, but I have to do it. I was hungry for it. And this was the end. And this I was keeping for four weeks.

From over there, they took me to the big barrack in the front where everybody was. I don't know how many thousand of thousand of people was. It was not easy to find. Somehow I found people. But they knew my husband. At this time he was not my husband. I didn't even know him - you know, I told them from where I am and they took care on me. That was a big help for me, because I was new in this barrack. Sure enough, I wasn't too long in Leipzig, because when the Russians came closer, they took us on a march.

We marched almost to Elbe and no food – nothing. But we took just a blanket on us. And it was raining and the blanket got really soaked. The blanket was heavier than I. And I couldn't hold it on my shoulders. A Russian girl took from me. What she did I don't know. I don't know how I survived. Then from over there in the march we didn't know if we are free or not because nobody was watching us. Sure enough, we went – where I don't know. Wherever I went, I saw soldiers laying dead. They been laying - it was a disgrace to describe how was it. But we went through. We went through, here the night was coming, where to go? To whom, nobody was watching us. Sure enough, we got ten girls together, and we went separate. We organized bread. We took so much bread from the soldiers – what they been dead – that the

bread was heavier than I was. And I couldn't carry. From the end, I just took two loaves. That's all what I could carry. We went. And it's night. We knocked on a door and it was a German home that was in Milberg. I didn't know where we are. She let us in. She let us in – it was ten girls. She stepped out from the house and we took over the house. We lived there – it was two or three days. What to do? We got to eat – not just the bread. I and another girl, and she went with me - organized to have milk, to have butter, to have flour. With us was a lady. She was this time 40 years old. We were still young. We brought the things, what we organized, and she baked for us and she cooked for us.

One day I said to the girls, “Look girls, I gonna find myself a buggy and whatever I have, and put the foot on this buggy and I gonna hit the road. Where I am going, I don't know.” I don't know Germany. This time, it was not even a train running. It was no flight. We didn't have money even for flying. What to do? I and another girl went with me to pull my buggy together and this girl, when it was put together and we were pulling. Then we saw a train and the hand from this buggy was so dark like the ground – like coal. What to do? Washed it up – with what? Where is water? We went to the train. From the train, is coming out the steam. And from the steam, turns the water and with this, we wash the hands. We washed the hands. Fine. Sure enough, walks through, ten guys – Jewish guys. And when I talked to the other girl the Jewish guys stopped us, “Hitler left Jewish girls alive?” I said, “We're here.” Between was my husband. He was not my husband at this time. I didn't knew him – nothing. When he spotted me, wherever I went, this man went after me. He didn't leave me. The other boys went someplace else. He was with me. And thanks to him, I survived. He helped me.

And I said, “I wanna go back to Poland. Maybe I will find somebody. Ok, then is again no train. Somehow a train went by. The train stopped. We got on the train. They didn't question us. We were there. And we went where the train goes, who knows. Sure enough, we hit Poland. We are in Poland. We came to Czestochowa. When I stepped out from the train, it was staying in the corner, Jewish guys. They looked at me, “You are alive? Do you know that we saw today your brother?” I said, “Where?” He told me the street – Krotka. I went to this street. Where they told me where I can find him, I went. And I didn't find him. Sure enough, looking, I see a shadow from far away. And I looked the shadow, and I said, “I don't know who.” I know my brother's name – I call his name. I didn't know who is. But the echo was so far. It was quiet. It was nine in the morning. He turned back, “Who's calling me?” And when he came closer and I got closer to him too, you know with walking. And this was my brother! You can imagine the happiness. And we went, went together and he tells me that my brother that my father heard that I am alive. And he was prepared with somebody to take him where they saw me. That was to hit the road on a Tuesday and I arrived Monday. You can imagine the happiness. And thanks to my husband. But at this time, he wasn't a husband. He helped me to come back. Because I don't know if I would made it.

When we got home, it was my brother and my father. Then they asked me where another brother is. I said, “I never saw him and I never know where he is.” And they said that they told

him that he is some place in Germany. I said, “Germany is big. I don’t know, I cannot tell you. I don’t know.”

Sure enough, what’s happened, I and my husband got married. Of course, my father didn’t approve. He didn’t want it. He was thanking him that he brought me back home alive. And she’s still young, she has time.” But he said, “I will not leave her. Wherever she will be, I gonna be.” What to do. We were in Poland when was the pogrom – the Kielce Pogrom. I said, “I am not staying longer in Poland.” I said to my father, “If you wanna go with us, you must book. So is my brother. He was mixed up with the properties will take and this and this and that. I said, “I don’t care. I not gonna stay here, because this is no life.”

What my husband did – he went to Krakow to get papers to go back to Germany and from Germany, we gonna go to the states. That was our project. Going to Germany, it wasn’t easy. It wasn’t easy, but we made it. We were there in Landsberg am Lech, in the city where Hitler wrote his book, *Mein Kampf*. We were there maybe about two years – more than that. But we made it to go to the states. When we came to the states, we came July the 4th 1949. It was a holiday.

Source: Dorothy Harding video testimony - <https://mchekc.org/portfolio-posts/hardingdorothy/>