

# Mania Weindling Testimony Transcript

I was born in Myszków, Poland and I went to school there till the third grade and my parents sent me to all girls' school in a big city and I stayed with my grandparents. And then when the – after the high, public school, I went one year to a - it's called in Poland it's called high school, and here it's called like a business school. Then the war broke out and I went back home.

And we were very close to the German border – about seven kilometers – so my parents ran away with us all and a neighbor. We borrow... We bought a wagon and horses and we ran away from there till we come to the border, to Russia border. And my parents don't, my mother really don't want to go into Russia, so we come back to home. We was home about, would say, half a year. Then after the half a year, they said *judenrein* – we have to go to a ghetto. And the ghetto was in Warsaw – I mean in Zawiercie – called Warthenau in Pol... in German.

And they took us, all of us, my brothers and my one brother, because the other brother had never come back. He went for my father. He took out my father's name and put his name in and he was 13 years old – or 14 - and they took him to a working camp. And when we was in the ghetto, my parents were hidden in an attic with some friends. And they took us out on a big marketplace. And they said young people should go this way and – because we used to have cards what you worked in a factory there for the Germans by the uniforms. And my parents were hidden when ten minutes before the whole thing was already I saw my parents coming. The Germans found them in the attic. Some Polish guy for half a pounds of sugar told them where they are. They brought all of them out and put them on the pavement and with their face down. And I wanted to run there when I got a big smack through mine bottom from a German policeman and he never allowed me to go there. And they took all of them – my brother too – that one that is in Israel now – Zvi Feldbaum. They took them to a big *shul* and they hold them there about a half a day. And us, what we have the papers that we worked, they let us live in there. And they took my parents – we don't know where they took my parents. My brother went to a camp and he don't know what they took my parents.

And then I was by myself with a other girl. And we lived in a small apartment – was like a store before about, I would say, maybe a half a year. And then they started to take... they took us all away from there. I was not bad – it was not so bad in the ghetto for me because I used to have a friend – a non-Jewish guy what his parents was born in Gdansk. Gdansk belonged before to Germans – before 1914. Then he was in... They took him to the military – to the German military. He was in a uniform and he used to come to the ghetto gates and bring me bread and butter, food. And so then after everything that we worked there we have to go *judenrein* they said and we all have to be on the market and they took us out to the trains and put us on the trains and they took us to – we have not know where we going – and we come, when we come, they stopped the train. We saw a big sign Auschwitz.

They took us off on the Auschwitz. We have nothing on – only the clothes and they said that the old people this way and young people there and children with the old people. And they said to us we take the children and the old people will watch the children. And we never saw the children and the old people no more. And I was in Birkenau and every morning we have to go out what say *appell* - they count us. Oh, before this other thing happened, they put a number on your arm. And you was not a name there – only the number. And when you... And shaved us like a – the whole hair, everyplace and put some striped uniform on you and wooden shoes. That was alright because we know that we will live. Because the people what they don't know – they don't put numbers on and not shaved, we know they were never alive no more.

And then I was in a block number 8, I think. I don't remember for sure. And I did not work when they start because we were very sick. Some people were sick. And they, every morning, we have to go out and stay there and some people was older people. So they took them out and we never know where they took them. Later on I was going to work to a – I don't know, how do you say – fields what we only knocked on big stones make small gravel. This was our job. And they give us to eat nothing. Only to the evening when we come they give us a little slop water with something in it and a piece of bread. And we slept in a like a wooden things – one, two. And three on one and three on the top. And no covers, no nothing.

And then I was there about – oh about three, four months work by the stones. Then, I used to have friends when we used to go to work, men from a different camp – we hear the names – they called the names, you know. Like, they called me, “Mania, Mania.” You know? I don't recognize who they are. When there was some cousins – far, you know, three times removed or something, and they were on the men's blocks. But we can never see them, you know, from there. And they have got the wires that electric around Auschwitz. And so they sent some cigarettes or something to a block *älteste*, what was over us, for me. And she took me out from the stone cutting to a potato bunker. And if you work in the potato bunker like for the German, you know, for the food. And then we have got potatoes to eat raw and the carrots and cabbage and stuff like this.

And it was terrible because there was winter. And I got very sick. I got typhus. And they took us under the hospital it's called in German, *revier*. And I met there many girls from my city and from the city what I used to go to school with. And I met there a girl what was named Kitty Felix. Her father was non-Jewish and her mother was Jewish so she and her mother was there and they were nurses in that hospital. And one time, she give me – I could not eat and I could not nothing to do because the typhus makes you very weak. And she used to take me from one side to the other side because my – the flesh should not get, you know, how you say it? Sores. Then one day she come in and she give me some bread with little...

Interviewer: Unclear question.

No. What is that called? Garlic put on so I can eat because she say if I don't eat and I don't start walking down they will take me to the gas chambers. And then she tried to take me down to walk, you know. And there was big, big, long... Life a long stove, oven, you know, what was going over the whole block. And she tried to put me up there and go down and up there and go down. So then, she come back after two days and she say, "I'm sorry, Mania, you have to go out now to the camps to work and me too because all of the people – you friends and everybody is no more here. They all went to the, you know, to the gas chambers. Then I went and worked in the same thing like in the potato bunker later.

And then after about a few months – I don't remember when that was, they took us out from Auschwitz and they put us to Brzezinka.<sup>1</sup> It's a suburban from Auschwitz. And they used to work in the, in the barracks – put together clothes for the, our people brought and look for gold and put in boxes, you know, and shoes - put in the shoes. And that was the worst camp because there was old crematoriums were there. We were so far, about, I would say, 200 meters from the crematorium. When you could hear the noise and we would hear the scream when we could not see because the wires – the electric wires, then was the plain wires, and the wires was covered with... How do you say it? Blankets.

Every Friday they took us out and put us one, one, one and we was wearing no clothes. And there was a German, I don't know who he was. And he used to "*Rein, raus, rein, raus.*" And when you was *rein* you got okay. When you were *raus*, you were dead. So, the whole thing was we was scared every Friday you was scared that you will be the last. We used to make our cheeks very red, you know, to make us a little bit more alive, you know. And one time, along... Before I wanted to go myself to a gas chamber because my feet was very sore from the walking to work and I have got big little, big stuff here like sores. So I wanted to go by myself there and the girl what was like a nurse in the block, she says come out and smack me in the face and she says, "What are you? Crazy? You are so young! Where are you going?" I say, "I cannot work no more." So she say, "I let you stay one day here hidden so you don't have to go to work." We were there in Brzezinka about, I don't know how long, when I know there was...oh, I was there about till 194-..., 1944. Then the Russian was coming. You know, the Russians were coming close.

So they took us out. We walked about two or three, four days. Three, four days we walked. When we walked, we come into Germany, there was about, I would say, two, three thousand girls going and there was only a hundred soldiers with us – the German. I mean, where do you run? You are deep Germany. You was scared that you'll be caught and so we never escaped. And they took us on trains later after many days and we come to a big camp called Ravensbrück. In Ravensbrück was so many people there in Ravensbrück that there was unbelievable. We have to sleep outside on the pavement, because there was no place no more

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<sup>1</sup> Brzezinka is Polish for Auschwitz-Birkenau. Here Mania is describing living in Birkenau and working in Kanada Kommando.

where to put the people to sleep. And the filth and the waste and the whole thing. Then one day maybe we got to... I was there they come out and they took 60 girls and I was between them and they took us to a camp. It's called Malchow.

There was no more – it was a working camp. There was no more electric wires around or nothing like this. And we used to see soldiers what was captured from the German like Italian, American and many other... Russians. And they used to always tell us tomorrow and this the war over. It was 1944. “The war is over. The war is over.”

We was very happy when we still have to go to work. We used to work in a factory underground – ammunition factory – little bullets. And I was working by a press, you know, to make the bullets. So we were not so scared no more there because there was no more like SS with us. There was the Wehrmacht. The Wehrmacht was all the people, you know. They used to leave us some bread under the benches and stuff. We used to take little piece of bread and I used to put in in the machine, you know, where they make the little bullets and the machine blowed up inside. And they could not hurt me because it was like in a little room and we stood there three, four hours we did not work and that was the sabotage what we used to do because of this. And then we could not do nothing so we used to make sometimes at night we used to put a piece of like a girl used to have a cigarette maybe – a light so the place were glowing on top so the lights, you know, because the whole factory was underground and upstairs there looked like a park. And we used to go in back from work, they used to go with us - women – they were like SS or something, and they were not so bad no more because the end of war they were scared too. And they used to go big trucks with fruit and vegetables and used to stop the trucks they asked them what time is it? And they'd make the [unclear] like this to go and jump on the wagon and take some food, you know, for other girls what is not work there. And then when we... that camp was, every day in the morning we used to go to work and come back and the food like always - no food – only a little soup and a little piece of bread. When there was no more a concentration camp. That was like a working camp.

And then one day, 1945, before, before the war is over – the war was not over yet – there come a big truck, big trucks - Red Cross trucks. And they said, “We are going to Sweden.” They took out one, two, three blocks and I was between the three blocks. I went in the second block. And they said that we are going to Sweden. To a country what never was in war. And they said, “It's neutral.” And we was still scared because people was talking it's saying the German doing it and then they take us to the gas chambers, you know. And there was some girls what understood English and the drivers from that Red Cross drive was English. Not English-American, but English-English. And they told them that, you know, we are going really to Sweden and they took us on the buses – Red Cross buses. They give us to eat very little because they are scared that we have not eaten so many years. Some girls got very sick, you know, from... And they took us, we went with the buses about, I would say, one day that the German was bombing the buses too and we used to jump off the buses once in a while and the last bus

was bombed and many girls were killed. And we come to a place where there was like a – when you open, when you go from one country to another.

Interviewer: The border.

Yeah, to a border and we opened the, the border and we go in and we see Germans again. So we said, “Oh, my God, we are back in...” “No,” they say, “This is Denmark. The Germans have nothing to do here with you. They only are occupying the place.” And they took us to a big nunnery and they give us... There was big, big tables with white cloths on it with bread and with, you know, bread and cakes and milk. They don’t give us food like meat because they were scared that we got sick. And they said some girls used to take the bread and the sandwiches and put it in their pockets. So the nuns used to say, “Don’t do it. You will have plenty to eat where you going.”

So, and then about a day later or two they took us on big trains on a boat – like a ferry. Denmark from Sweden is only an hour or two. And they brought us to Sweden to Malmo. The music was playing on the station. And they give us cake and some milk and water if you want it. And they took us to big, big places where they cut... They deloused us, like you know, took us – they put some stuff on us, you know – smelled terrible. All the clothes they put away and they burned it and they give us clothes donated by people in Sweden. And they took us to school – a big schools, and there was like a hospital and we were on a quarantine. We were not allowed to go out. There was military around us because many girls have got typhus. They come with lung sicknesses and very sick. And we were there about, I would say, two, three months. And I was not sick really so I used to go with the Red Cross lady out. She took me out on the bus, you know. I was not allowed to go out from her car. And this was the stuff but the Swedish people was very nice to us and very cordial, you know. They give us... They used to throw food and throw clothes through their gates. And the police used to not allow it, you know, because they would not know what the sickness we have. And this was Sweden. I was liberated from Swedish Red Cross about two weeks before the war was over. And when the war was over, when Germany capitulated, there was music in the street. People were dancing, you know, and stuff like this. And then I was a Swede.

Interviewer: How long did you stay in Sweden?

In Sweden, I was nine years. And I worked in a factory from dolls – stuffed dolls. And then I got married in 1948. And in 1950, I born a little girl. Then after a little while, people started to be scared. They said, “Sweden is in Europe, and there will be again a war.” So I got my husband because he had got a brother-in-law what was deceased, a brother too. And we applied to go to United States. And we got the visa and after nine years we come to the United States. And we are happy here. We work and this is all.

Source: Mania Weindling video testimony - <https://mchekc.org/portfolio-posts/weindlingmania/>