

Worker. So you were telling me about the Kinderaktion.

Yes. I stayed home because of the bad cold. And had I worked anyplace else, I would certainly have reported to work, because it was unforgivable to miss work. It could have had harsh consequences.

The young couple who shared the room with my father and me, because we had already been relocated to another place as the ghetto had been made smaller a year or so predating this date. So the only people in this one room that I was sharing with, like I said, other people, other families, was also occupied by an elderly couple who didn't work outside the ghetto.

Who were the guardians of a young granddaughter who may have been three, four or five years old. A very good child. I never saw her during the day. But I didn't-- nobody even knew there was a child in the room. She was so quiet.

The people left that morning were the elderly couple, the little girl, and I. The three of us were all dressed. The little girl I don't remember. Whatever time it was, but it was early in the morning, maybe 8 o'clock, I look out the window. And I see buses lining up down the street, trucks, buses. And Germans jumping out with dogs.

And one of those trucks-- I don't remember whether it had a cover on the back or not. Anyway, one of those trucks stops before our house. Out jump the Germans in their shiny boots, grim faces.

And momentarily, they barge into the kitchen, a very small kitchen. They barge in there and barge into the bedroom. And they survey the room and say-- tell the three of us, because the child was already hidden, the three adults, to stand and explain why we're not at work.

The elderly couple, to the best of my recollection, did not have a steady workplace. I think they earned their bread, their meager bread, by doing-- they were sawing wood for other people who needed-- who brought home logs. Maybe had smuggled out some logs from the workplace.

And the elderly man had a good saw, which he sharpened all the time. And they went around doing this intermittent work. And always took the little girl along. Well, they must have realized that these trucks bode no good. I mean, especially for the little girl, because at that time, there were very few children left in the ghetto.

Frantically, the grandmother had put the little girl into the bed that was shared by all three, and had heaped all the blankets and quilts. Well, actually, she had made it so it would look that it was just a made-up bed.

So first of all, one of the soldiers or officers confronts me and wants to know why I'm not at my workplace. Fortunately, I was dressed. I showed him my work permit. But what I said to him, I do not-- I don't know. I was stunned, petrified, and my heart was racing.

I am sure it could be seen through what I was wearing. I think at one time it actually stopped beating. He left me alone. He gave the grandparents a stern look. Perhaps he admonished me to not stay home anymore, that this could carry grave consequences, but I really don't remember. But he spoke to me sternly then shoved me away or out of the way.

The grandparents, he left-- said something in a harsh language to them, left them alone, then started tearing up the room. I think all three did that. They tore up the room. And it didn't take them any time to tear apart the bed clothes to come upon the little girl and dragged her out.

When they made sure there is nobody else hiding and nothing else was to be found, they dragged her out towards this truck. And the grandmother ran after them, fell down-- fell on her knees. Begged, pleaded, cried, wailed, followed them out to the truck to the curb.

And one of the soldiers either used his gun or a club and hit her. And she fell to the ground. She fell down in the street. The truck took off, and she was left behind. They took the little girl. There were other children on the truck. I could see

that from the window.

After I had seen that, I didn't want to see anymore. I know the grandmother came back in. And it was probably the greatest human tragedy that I have seen before my eyes.

And so three weeks later, you?

Three weeks later, shortly thereafter the kinder Aktion, my father decided that there was no hope for anybody to stay alive in the ghetto. And it would be-- it was time for me to make arrangements to escape. Do you want to hear about that?

Oh, that was easier said than done. It was very hard to find a family, a Lithuanian family, who would provide shelter. For good reason. They would put their own lives into grave danger. Harboring a Jew was almost a-- what is it? Well, a death sentence.

And so there was one hurdle, to find a place, to find a person willing to provide shelter. The other hurdle was to get out of the ghetto. All gates were guarded. It was difficult to slip through the fence. There are guard towers that are manned at all times.

And there were ways to slip out with a work group, or work brigade, as they were called, that worked outside of the ghetto. And with the knowledge-- it was usually best that with the knowledge of the group leader one could slip away either to do some trading, bartering, get food.

Eight Mark.

So you could get out with the work brigade.

Yes. So the preliminary plans that had to be made were to establish contact with a former bookkeeper who had worked for my dad in my hometown. Perhaps it's somewhat reminiscent of the Frank family's bookkeeper.

This was a very devoted former employee who had known me since-- practically since I was born, and had always allowed me to have the run of the office, and type on-- and play on every typewriter that I could find.

She had married a Lithuanian. She was herself a German of Russian German descent who had married a Lithuanian and had moved to Kovno after her marriage, after Memel had been retaken by the Germans in 1939. And my dad had found out that her husband occasionally came to the ghetto on some business.

I'm not quite sure what it was. But there were some work-- what is it? I can think of the German word. [SPEAKING GERMAN]

Workshops.

Yes, workshops, exactly, where German uniforms were repaired. And perhaps other repair work was done. And the bookkeeper's husband, [? Maita's ?] husband, occasionally came to the ghetto. My father could not contact him personally, because my father did not work inside the ghetto. He worked at the airfield.

But I believe that he passed on written messages to be delivered to [? Maita's ?] husband asking him if there was a way-- if they knew of anybody who would take me in. And the reply came back a short while later that if I could find a way out-- a safe way out of the ghetto, that I could stay with [? Maita ?] and her husband in Kaunas in their very own apartment.

At least for a while. Maybe later, they would find a safer place for me in the country, perhaps. But that happened April or May. I think it was in April. So very hasty arrangements were made. None by me. All done by my father, to whom I really owe my life.

He found a work brigade that worked outside the ghetto. The group leader was willing to let me join his group on a certain day. His group was guarded by several German guards, some of whom had shown a shred of humanity in the past and had let people not connected with the group either leave the group before they got to their workplace.

And so I left with-- I went to the place of assembly. It was a small group. Unfortunately, I don't remember the group's leader's name. But I do know that they had to cross a small river from the ghetto to get to their workplace. So all of us-- it must have been the river Neris.

The group, 10 or 15 people at the most, all sat down in a row boat. And the boat crossed the river. I don't know if the guard had been bribed or not. I don't know that. Some guards would take a bribe and would look the other way. Some would take a bribe and would not look the other way.

I also had to have somebody help me to take off the yellow star. Both of them, front and back, had been pinned on. I could certainly handle the one in the front, needed somebody to help me with the star in the back. And I didn't know that, but a dear friend was in that work group. And she sat behind me. So I asked her, would she remove the pins from the star.

She did. She wished me good luck, embraced me. She survived. She was in Israel. I don't know if she's still alive. Her name was [? Shainale ?] [? Suvolsky. ?] She had been one of my mother's nurses.

Well, we reached the other side of the river at the-- yes. Everybody got out and regrouped. And I stayed behind and hid behind some bushes, waited until everybody had left. And our meeting place had been previously discussed and designated.

It was on the major highway just a few feet from the small river where [? Maita ?] would be waiting in a carriage. And as soon as we saw each other, we had to just get on with our journey. There was I guess a coachman who-- that was the only transportation available. Very few civilian cars were available in the city.

So she was sitting there waiting for me. I jumped in. We didn't say a word. Both of us must have been very, very tense and very, very scared. And she signaled that we were ready to get to her destination. And not one word was exchanged during the whole trip until we got to her place.

And incidentally, she had a very, very nice place. And once we got there, we regrouped. And she gave me some coffee and revived my spirits. I think both of us were trembling when we made it up the stairs.

And many things happened in that apartment also. Ostensibly, I was going to be the maid there. I had my own room. And I certainly was not treated like a maid. But for anybody who visited, I had to play the role of a maid. And for the most part, I did that well.

I found out late-- yes, she told me that because the apartment was so large-- it really was a luxury apartment on the main street in Kaunas-- they had to give up one room to an SS woman who worked in the civilian administration. And of course she told me to be very careful and not to let on that I understood a syllable of German.

That I was there as the newly hired Lithuanian maid. I think she gave me a kerchief to tie around my head and apron. And some coarse clothes, because I certainly didn't bring any clothes. I didn't have any clothes.

So yes, I had to be very careful around this very arrogant I think SS woman. And I helped in the kitchen. I was very pleasant. I stayed out of sight when somebody visited, went to my room. Until one day, [? Maita ?] had a visitor. A trusted friend. A German woman.