

## Present Memories, Rena Finder

0:02

I was 12 years old when we were forced to resettle into the Krakow ghetto.

0:09

I trembled with such fear and hopelessness as we walked through the narrow familiar streets into the ghetto, carrying our meager possessions, pulling the pushcart filled with some bedding, a mattress and some pots and pans.

0:26

We went over the bridge into our prison behind the high walls, surrounded by armed guards and hundreds of dogs trained to tear us apart.

0:37

Since adults over 55 and children under 12 were deemed unfit for work, and we believed that work meant life,

0:47

my parents changed my birthday to make me two years older.

0:52

There were workshops in the ghetto.

0:55

Some of us were tailors, dressmakers, shoemakers, boot makers.

1:00

Others made brooms, brushes or worked in printing shop.

1:05

The ghetto was overcrowded and dirty.

1:08

Several families shared the small rooms.

1:12

Buildings were old. For many,

1:15

bathrooms were outside.

1:17

Water and electricity were only available at certain times.

1:22

It was hard to keep clean.

1:25

It was hard to keep warm.

1:27

There was little food.

1:29

We were starving.

1:31

We had no medicine.

1:33

Sickness and despairs were everywhere.

1:37

Day and night,

1:38

There was more horror, more terror.

1:42

Soldiers stormed through the streets and the buildings, arresting people, selections and transports to where we didn't know.

1:52

I remember that summer day when there was a roundup and my grandparents couldn't get life permits I had with them in the courtyard of our building, under bushes and piles of leaves.

2:05

We stayed there all day, not moving, while the soldiers with their bayonets search the buildings room by room.

2:15

At one time, one of the murderers was inches away from my head, but I didn't flinch.

2:22

Finally we heard the trucks leaving.

2:26

The shooting ended.

2:28

No more barking dogs.

2:30

Slowly, we crawled out from our hiding place, trying not to look suspicious.

2:36

Suddenly, out of nowhere, the last patrol of the day appear.

2:42

They pushed me aside and took my grandparents away.

2:46

I can still see these dear old people walking away, holding hands, never looking back.

2:55

I stood there sobbing, helpless.

2:59

A few weeks later, at midnight, there was a banging on our door.

3:04

My handsome, wonderful father was arrested and taken away.

3:10

Not long after the ghetto was liquidated, Dead day will be etched in my mind forever.

3:17

The s s troopers invaded early in the morning.

3:21

They're screaming and the sound of their boots filling us with terror.

3:26

We were told to pack a small suitcase and leave.

3:30

Small children and the elderly were kept back.

3:34

My mother and I tried to take my blonde blue eyed 5 year old cousin Jenny with us.

3:40

When the German beat us, we were forced to leave her in the orphanage.

3:46

All those left behind in the Krakow ghetto were murdered that night.

3:52

Without food, without hope, just fear, we March into another nightmare, Plaszow, a concentration camp just 7 kilometers from the ghetto.

4:04

It was a sleepy little village with three Jewish cemeteries.

4:09

Some parents hid their small children in backpacks.

4:13

Only a few of these children were successfully given to the Righteous Gentiles.

4:19

The rest were hidden in barracks where they knew they were in constant danger and had to keep quiet no matter how tired and hungry they were.

4:31

Several months later, our beautiful children were discovered, loaded on trucks and taken away.

4:39

We were warned that if we move, they would be shot.

4:43

My mother and I built barracks and roads paved with crushed gravestone from the Jewish cemeteries under the watchful eyes of Amon Goeth, a vicious, sadistic murderer.

4:57

Every second we were in danger of being shot, hanged or beaten to death.

5:03

I was struggling just to survive when I first met Oskar Schindler.

5:09

Schindler was a German industrialist who joined the SS party just to become rich.

5:16

Early 1940 he took over and pots and pans factory in Krakow.

5:21

Using his charm, he intentionally befriended the SS officer, wined and dined with them and won their affection with bribes and expensive gifts.

5:34

This enabled him to get the permits necessary to run the factory and to hire the necessary workers.

5:42

My mother and I were selected to work for Oskar Schindler and we moved to the small camp he built for his workers.

5:50

He paid Amon Goeth a fortune for this.

5:54

Herr director was our savior, our guardian angel.

5:59

He had a smile and a kind word for everyone, especially for the children.

6:04

I was one of the youngest to be lucky enough to be on Schindler's list.

6:10

Sadly, this heaven didn't last long.

6:13

Order soon came to liquidate the camp.

6:19

When Plaszow was liquidated, Oskar Schindler paid Amon Goeth a lot of money to move his factory and his workers to Brinley, Czechoslovakia.

6:30

The men on Schindler's list were shipped in one transport.

6:34

The women mistakenly ended up in Auschwitz.

6:38

It was only then that we learned that our children had been taken here and had been murdered on the day of their arrival.

6:47

It was then that I lost faith in God.

6:51

Most of us would have died in Auschwitz had not Oskar Schindler rescued us.

6:57

He sent his beautiful secretary with a fortune in diamonds to bribe the commander.

7:03

I was among the 300 women who left the death camp.

7:08

My mother and I survived. Over six million

7:11

others did not.

7:14

If it weren't for Oskar Schindler, I wouldn't have had a chance to grow up, to get married, to have children and grandchildren.

7:23

Oskar used his fortune and influence and risk his life to save thousand Jews.

7:31

He and his wife Emile are shining examples that people can make a difference.

7:38

For years, I couldn't bear to recount my own personal experience.

7:44

But when the haters in this generation became more violent, and when the revisionist began spreading their lies denying that the Holocaust ever happened, I knew I could no longer remain silent.

7:59

In 1946, I married Mark Finder, who is also a Holocaust survivor.

8:05

We have three children and six beautiful grandchildren.