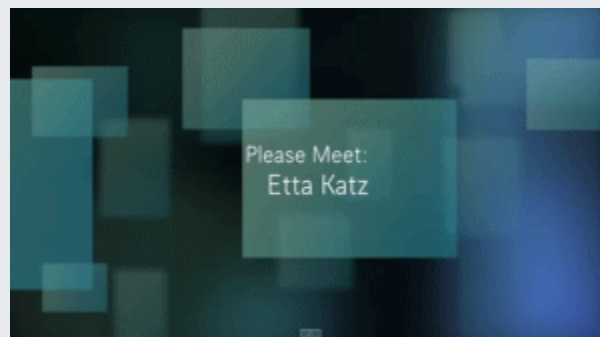
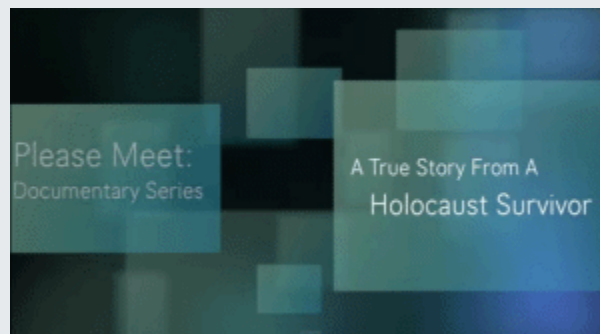


A TRUE STORY FROM A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR: PLEASE MEET ETTA KATZ -- ILLUSTRATED SCREENPLAY

by Etta Katz

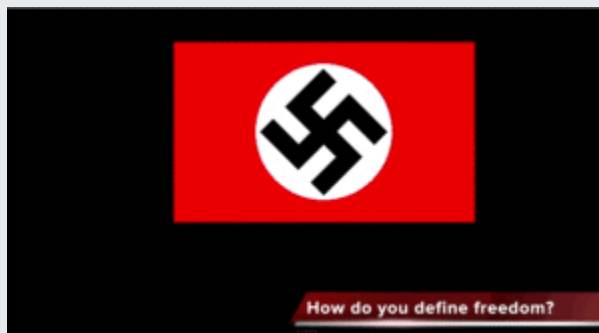
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[Interviewer] How do you define freedom?



[Etta Katz] Hitler didn't succeed. Because we're here.



This is my father and mother. My mother was 18.



He was 26. And this is -- c'mon, I'll show you --

[Woman] Oh, this is so nice!

[Etta Katz] Come here. You are in here, you guys.



[Woman] [Laughs]



There's Tommy Little.



[Etta Katz] Yeah, I told you they were very little, but so cute. They are still so adorable.



All the family. You're a married man.



When are you going to have kids now?

[Woman] Soon.

[Etta Katz] I hope so! You promised!

[Woman] I know!

[Etta Katz] Where do you want to tape? The living room?

[Man] Yeah. That's good. That's fine.

1. BEFORE THE WAR

[Interviewer] Where are you from?



[Etta Katz] I am from a place, it's called Valeecka, Valeecka Luchy. That means, "big prairies" in English. It was the bread basket around my area. There were a lot of farmers and they were producing a lot of wheat and corn and all of the vegetables. Everything. So it was kind of a prosperous place.

[Interviewer] Did your family celebrate Shabbat?

[Etta Katz] Yes. Absolutely. Friday night was a beautiful evening, with lit candles and, you know, with the white tablecloth. And no matter what happened during the week, for Shabbat we saved our food, the best food, and the best baked goods we had. Friday and Saturday, even some leftovers on Sunday. It was beautiful. It was really a day of rest.

[Interviewer] What's your first childhood memory?

[Etta Katz] My first childhood memory, I was about three years old, and I remember my aunt's wedding. And I sang at my aunt's wedding, and they were amazed at how I could sing. I can still sing very good, but I have never had any lessons, but still I like to sing. And then I remember, because they were always, as I was growing up, they were complimenting me.

[Interviewer] What did you and your friends do for fun?

[Etta Katz] On Saturday we used to get together, actually in my house, and we were singing and dancing because we didn't have videos and all that. Well, you didn't have it at the time either, but we didn't have phonographs or anything. So we were singing ourselves, and dancing.

[Interviewer] Do you have any siblings?

[Etta Katz] I had three brothers and two sisters. So we were six children.

[Interviewer] Are they still alive?

[Etta Katz] Well, three of us are alive. The two brothers were killed in the concentration camp, because they were only eight and ten, and they didn't keep those people because they couldn't work. They went with my parents straight to the crematorium.

[Interviewer] What year did the Nazis invade your village?

[Etta Katz] Well, first the Hungarians came. They took over in 1939. The Hungarians took over. And then it wasn't good, because it was the Jewish Question what to do with them, so they took away each time more from us, the property they took away from my father, the thing that he cannot work anymore.

[Interviewer] How did your family make ends meet?

[Etta Katz] And I went and I learned to sew. So in secret I was making clothes for friends and for elite. I learned very fast. In fact, they caught me working once, and they took me to court, and I was alone because my parents couldn't come with me. I went to court, and a reverend who had two children -- I made clothes for them -- he was a witness that I did make clothes, but I didn't charge. He got me off.

[Interviewer] When did the Nazis first come to your house?

[Etta Katz] It was the Sader. And the Nazis invaded. That was the last Sader. And they were sitting in the next room, and my father and my grandfather were doing the Sader. They were watching us so we wouldn't go away, you know, because they wanted to take us away right after Passover.

[Interviewer] What happened the day your family got taken away?

[Etta Katz] Well, the Nazis came one morning. That was not the Nazis, but the Hungarian police. They came and said, "Gather your clothes, gather the valuables, and we are taking you until the war is over. When the war is over we are going to save your keys and everything you left, and you'll get it back." That's what they told us.

[Interviewer] What valuables did you take with?

[Etta Katz] I put on about 15 dresses, one on top of the other, and all that we had. We took the candles for shabbat, you know, that got lit on Friday night, and we still observed. You know, we had some food that we brought along. And then they gave us a little kitchen there. We were about, I'd say about 100 families laid out in a big area. And we stayed there. And it wasn't comfortable because we were one next to the other. We had to make room. But we got along very good. We figured, "We'll go home. The war is going to be over some time." Well, that wasn't so.

Six weeks later, there come the SS, and says, "We are taking you to work."

2. LIFE IN THE CAMP

[Interviewer] Where did the SS guards take you?



[Etta Katz] They loaded us on trains. And we were eager to go, because we thought, "It's going to be better. Who cares? We'll work!" So when they loaded us on the train ...



they gave us -- there was no toilet -- a bucket. You can imagine! And the train was a freight train.



We slept on the floor. There was even no room. We were almost one on top of the other because there were about 100 people standing room only. So you imagine. [Big sigh] [Inaudible]



We had to go in that bucket in front of everybody. You know how you felt? I cannot -- it's hard to say what you could feel when you have to go pull down your pants in front of everybody else. But nature calls, and you gotta go!

Food was very minimal. We were hungry, and we already wanted to get there. It took four days and four nights. Can you imagine? And that bucket was once in a while emptied, you know when we stopped, and it was spilling while it was all over the floor. Stench! Some people were dying, people were dying. There was no food. And we were already so tired. We all said, "I wish we'd get there."

[Interviewer] Where did the train stop?

[Etta Katz] We got to Auschwitz. We come to Auschwitz, and they separate one from the other, you know. The parents and the small kids went on one side. We didn't know where they were going. They were throwing us out of the train. The old people were falling, because they didn't give us stairs. But the young people could jump off, you know.



And they were hitting them and dying right in front of us. Well, we saw, "It's no good."

[Interviewer] What happened to your family?



[Etta Katz] So a guy comes over to me and I was hanging on to my brothers, eight and ten. I didn't want to get lost in the crowd. So a Jewish guy who was a capo -- the SS made them help them -- and he comes over and he says, "Give those children to your mother," in German. And I spoke German so I understood his German. And I didn't know why he says I should give them. I hang on to them so much. I didn't want them to get killed or lost.



And he comes at the end where they were separating mothers and the children and the fathers and the young people, you know that go to work. So when they were separating us, he came and yanked the two children from my hands. I was holding them. He said, "Give them to your mother." And he screamed at me so that the SS would know what he was doing. He just screamed. And my mother grabbed them and ran after us for a little while.



And then they pushed her back to the other side. I didn't know where they were going. All I did was look back. She never looked back.



I looked back and she was walking with the children, and we were walking out this side ...



and we didn't know nothing. So if I don't give them, and I'm stubborn, and I don't give the children when they yanked them out, I would have not been here. I would have been in the crematorium with the children. Because they never separated a child from her mother or father because they didn't want screaming and carrying on. They went together because they didn't keep the children and the elderly. My mother was young. She was only 40. My father was 48.

So we came there and a HORRIBLE thing happened.



First of all, they told us to undress, and put the clothes down, and on the way out, pick them up. We are going in the showers to shower. Well, I was glad to shower. I was all ready. And put your valuables and put everything you'll find. It wasn't so. We went into the shower naked, we went in the other side. They give us striped shirts.

Never a towel or anything, over the wet body we went out the other way. We never saw our clothes again. Nothing. Nothing.



They shaved off all the hair from the head, the pubic hair, underarms -- everything was shaved. So my first experience, I asked the SS, "When are we going to see our parents?" Guess what they told us?



"See this, where it's burning? That's where they are. Your parents and your family are there." I thought they were crazy! I mean, how could any human being do to another, you know, such things?



And the world stood by and nobody lifted a finger.



Not even God! Okay?



So we started to scream and cry, and they started to beat us, not to do that. And I started to yell out the names of my sisters ...



because I couldn't recognize them, you know, all shaved. I felt I have two sisters. I want to cling to them. And I still didn't believe what happened. So as I was screaming the names, an SS runs to me close and runs so fast and gives me a big slap in the face that I can see stars. I was blinded from her. That's how hard she hit me. So that was for the evening they served us a soup, and no spoons!



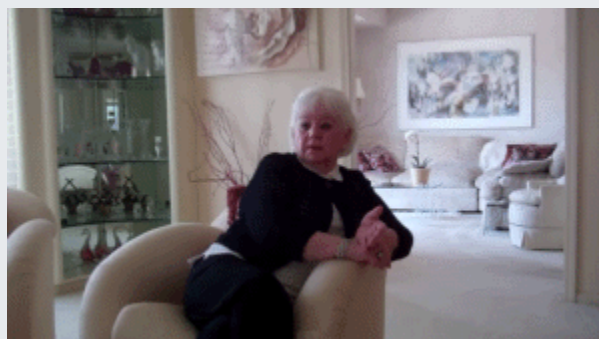
And when we were drinking the soup we counted that everybody should have, my sisters we shouldn't take from each other. Like three times I swallowed, and my sister, until we finished. Which wasn't much. Believe me, one could have had enough from that [inaudible]. For breakfast we had black coffee.



That's it!



And for lunch, for three days, they gave us this much bread -- that's about three slices -- once a week. Because they were giving bread out and a little cheese once a week.



This is what we did. Every morning black coffee. The people were eating the grind from the coffee, and at lunch time, a little bread with whatever they gave us, cheese. And at night we were having soup. And we were hungry all the time. I tell you, I can't be hungry now, because if I am hungry, it reminds me of the past.

The first night came and they put us into cages.



They were one, two or three. The cages were not more than 9 x 12. Not even that. 9 x 9. About 12 girls together in the cages, with a little blanket and we were like sardines, sleeping next to one another. And that was our sleeping. And the hoping was, "Well, maybe the war will be over. Maybe tomorrow we will be better." It didn't get better. It got worse every day. And still they woke us up at 5:00 in the morning to count us if nobody ran away. So we got up in the morning and that was before they gave us the coffee, and I tell you it was cold. It was miserable. We were huddling because the air was very, very cold in the morning in Poland. That wasn't Poland. Because I was one night heard them scream in the crematorium. I heard the people scream. I didn't know how close it was to my barracks. They were screaming like somebody was tearing them apart. And all of a sudden, in unison, and then it quieted down.

[Interviewer] How long were you in Auschwitz?

[Etta Katz] We stayed there in Auschwitz for about six weeks in the same [inaudible]. Then one day they take us out, about 1,000 girls, and they put us in a big big huge room six weeks later. You know, there was no work for us. They didn't know what to do with us. So they put us in a huge room. And I remember still today that there was wooden floors. Some stood. We wait two hours. We look at each other. What in the world are we waiting for? And you know, we never knew what was going to be next. The fear was tremendous. All of a sudden, after two or three hours, finally, it was very long, an SS woman comes over and takes us out. She says, "Come on, come on, out, out, out!" Then she says, "You know where you were going to go? You were waiting for the crematorium. But it was too busy, and they didn't get to you. But we got an order that you are going to the crop factories to work, so you're safe."

3. THE CROP FACTORY

[Etta Katz] We went there and they gave us already beds. Soldiers were there before, you know with not mattresses, but hay was stuffed into -- it was fine. We figured it was better than on the floor, you know, or in Auschwitz, in those cages. But the bombarding was impossible. They were bombarding and the SS ran to the bunkers, but we stayed put. If they kill us, they kill us. That didn't make a difference. Can you believe in miracles? That we weren't hit?

[Interviewer] What did you do for work?

[Etta Katz] I was making the springs for the guns and for the cannons. For all the munition. And I had the foreman, who wanted to run away with me, to hide me. I said, "I can't go. I have two sisters." He says, you're going to [inaudible] the sisters. I can hide you, but not the sisters." I said, "So I'm not going." And I didn't go.

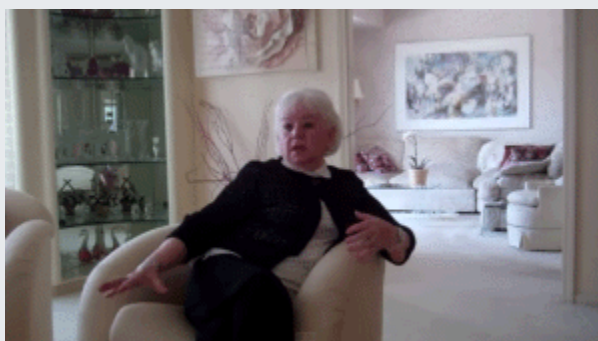
4. BERGEN-BELSEN

[Etta Katz] One day the allies were coming closer, so they took us away again. We shouldn't be liberated. So they took us to Bergen-Belsen. Well, I thought it will be better. On the train we had no food, nobody gave us

anything. We were miserable. But somehow, some of us survived, some passed out and died. And that's how we got to Bergen-Belsen. Bergen-Belsen was total hell.



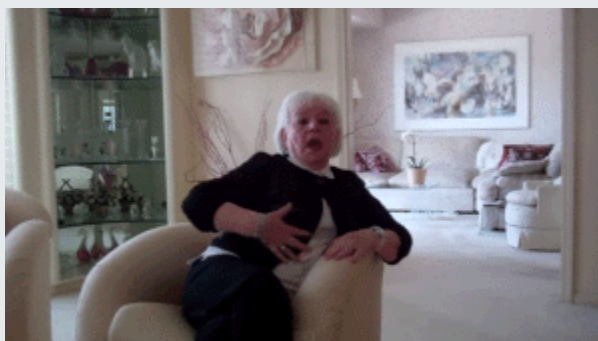
The first thing I saw there, I saw a mountain of corpses thrown one on top of the other, and I looked the other way because I couldn't look, I couldn't look.



We come there and you see skeletons with diarrhea, typhoid fever, with diarrhea, just running out ...



the feces on the floor, all over, even when we were sleeping. I was sleeping at night, they are on the floor again, spread out, a little blanket they gave us, and in the morning I saw around me that people. And when I got up, I thought, "I'm still alive?! How is that possible?" And so it was for six straight weeks.



People were dying. I was holding my own, and I was sick. And oh, my hair grew out, you know, and it was kind of nice. I had nice wavy hair. And an SS came over to me, a woman if I can do her hair.



I said, "Sure." I did my best, and I did a nice job actually. She gave me food for that, so it held me over a little bit, you know. Then I told her, I can knit mittens for her, you know? And I, in the dark, because it was dark ...



by the outside light, by touch, I made the mittens and a scarf. She brought me the needles and the ... So, I wasn't her friend, but she treated me a little nicer. So that was my survival. I shared with my sisters whatever I could. And that was for six weeks we were there, and I thought to myself, "Well, they are so close, the allies, I should survive, and my sisters." That's all you were thinking is of yourself. Somebody else dies, they die. You are so used to corpses all lined, all over.

5. I SURVIVED

[Etta Katz] We didn't know it was the end. And all of a sudden, the British soldiers marched in, and we started to jump and scream. And holding on to them, we held their hands.



You know we were touching them, and not letting them go. We didn't understand English. But somehow we communicated. And they gave us chocolate, and they started to give us food. That was six weeks later, after all that torture. Liberation. We were like skeletons. I mean, I weighed maybe 70 pounds.



And we were hanging on and dancing, and they still were shooting. They were still shooting at us. But finally that stopped. And more soldiers came in. And they were very kind. They couldn't believe what they saw. They just couldn't believe it. Corpses all over and sick people.



People were still dying because they had nothing to live with. They don't have no food. Listen to this. So three days later, I get sick. I passed out. Well, the soldiers were there, they have army hospitals. They took me to the hospital. [Inaudible] They had to delouse me. I had a head full of lice. Filthy. Sick. So they took me to a place where they put white powder to take the lice, and then they showered -- naked again! -- with men, soldiers. It didn't matter! I was so sick I didn't care what they are doing with me. They put me there. And my sister -- the other sister was sick, too -- and my younger sister wasn't. So she wasn't going with the ambulance. The younger sister who died -- Hella -- you remember her, maybe -- she was holding on to the ambulance wheel. She says, "You're going to drag me if you don't take me along to see where my sisters are going, because I am alone in this world, and I want to see where they are." So she already didn't believe.



She thought they are taking us to the crematorium. You know, so she cried, and held on, and you know what? They put her on the ambulance. They took her along so she should see. And she walked home from the hospital to the barracks. And every day -- she wasn't supposed to come because it was a contagious disease -- and she came every day, and diarrhea, and you know there was nothing left of us. It was a miracle that we survived. But the British took very good care of us in the hospital. Very good care.

So that was the end. And they took us to Budapest after that. From Budapest, they put us on trains -- open trains, closed, all kinds, wherever they could put us, we were used to everything. It didn't matter. Free was free, and we were happy. I wanted to go to my home town to see who came home.

6. THE AFTERMATH

[Etta Katz] Nobody came home. We came home, and my brother, the three girls. My mother, father, grandfather, aunts, uncles, they all were killed, all were killed. There was nothing. So we came to our house, we had a big house there, and it was ransacked. The furniture was taken out. The clothes were there where we left them. Whatever possessions they took. So there was nothing to stay. The Russians were there at that time occupied [inaudible]. And we were afraid of the Russian soldiers. So from there, we picked ourselves up and came to the Czech Republic, from Carpathia to the Czech Republic. When we came to the Czech Republic, it was paradise.



Just think about it. How can any human being do that to others, for nothing, just because you are a Jew? Okay?

So we came back and naturally I was happy to meet my brother, and other friends. Not many! Some went with their little brothers and sisters to the crematorium, because they can't let go. So they went away screaming. So then we are home. And we had nothing to stay for. The Russians took over. So we went to the Czech Republic because we were used to the Czech. We have freedom with the Czechs. So we were there and we settled in [inaudible]. And I have to tell you this story. My mother, before we separated, she says, I want you to learn Uncle Henry's phone number -- no, the address, not the phone number -- because, whoever survives -- I don't know who will survive and what we are going to do, where we are going to be -- each of you should know 1215 South Halster Street, I still remember, South Halster Street, the Vienna Sausage Company, and his name was Harry Davis. And she says, the only reason I am giving you this address, not his home, because they will find him, because Vienna Sausage will be there. If it's a home, he might -- how intelligent she was -- he might move around and then, you know. And sure enough, my brother sent a telegram that four of us survived, and my uncle sent us papers. And within a year, we came from [inaudible] to America. We flew to New York, there was no airport here in '46, and we came by train to America, and that's how we settled. First we were living with my uncle. Can you imagine my aunt had three children of her own, and she took in three girls until we got situated and got work, and somehow got our apartments and we moved away. But in the meantime, we were taken care of by relatives.

So, like I say, it was horror that never leaves me. But in the meantime, I have a beautiful family -- that includes you guys -- and I go on, sometimes I'm sad. But most of the time I'm happy that I survived.



Hitler didn't succeed, because we're here.

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Etta Katz: The one and only

Scott Emalfarb: Creator

Lindsay Emalfarb: Creative Director

This was such a humbling interview. Etta is my step-grandma and she is truly a remarkable person with an incredible story. Lindsay and I cannot thank her enough for her hospitality and her trust that she gave us for this video documentary series.