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## **Against All Odds:**

**Born in Mauthausen with Eva Clarke**

May 30, 2018

57 minutes, 15 seconds

Speaker: Eva Clarke

Transcribed by: Carla Altomare

[Holocaust Living History Workshop](#)

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- Time Transcription
- 0:04 [Read Write Think Dream / The Library Channel / UC San Diego]
- 0:06 [[www.uctv.tv/library-channel](http://www.uctv.tv/library-channel)]
- 0:10 Eva Clarke: I'm here today because I'm a survivor of the Holocaust. I am a survivor, but only just. Because I was born in a concentration camp right at the very end of the Second World War. But that comes right at the very end of my story.
- 0:11 [The Library / UC San Diego / Holocaust Living History Workshop / May 30, 2018]
- 0:27 Eva Clarke: And I start my story with this map you can see on the screen. This is one of Sir Martin Gilbert's maps, he is a very well-known - he was a very well-known English historian of the Holocaust, of Churchill. And this map shows - certainly not all because there were hundreds of camps - but it shows quite a few of the main camps that existed in Nazi-occupied Europe during the Second World War. As I say, it doesn't show all of them, it does show all the death camps: the red ones on the right. Everywhere where you see the Swastika, the Nazi emblem, there you see a name and that name indicates either a transit camp, a concentration camp, a death camp. And the three camps that my family were involved in are the three names you can see in boxes.
- 1:17 Eva Clarke: The first one is called Theresienstadt. That is the German word for a town and a country that used to be called Czechoslovakia and is now called the Czech Republic. And the Czech word for that place is Terezín, which I tend to use, simply because my mother was Czech and I find it less of a mouthful than saying Theresienstadt. The second place you will all know of: the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp in Poland, but I'm not sure how many of you know the name Mauthausen. Certainly, I think more of you, being in the United States will know of this place as opposed to where I speak most of the time which is in the UK. Simply, well - I'm getting ahead of myself, sorry, you'll hear that at the end. Right, now because I also mainly talk in the UK, the other reason why I use this particular map is to bring to your attention the inset in the circle in the top left-hand corner, where you can see a map of part of the British Isles. And there you can also see a Swastika.
- 2:23 Eva Clarke: The Swastika is over the Channel Islands, over Jersey and Guernsey and Alderney. Because they were invaded by the Germans, there were Jewish people living there, and they were either imprisoned on the islands or they were sent to concentration camps in Europe. So that shows how closely the whole thing came to mainland Britain. Now, because I'm telling you a family story, it comes naturally to me to show you family photographs. And this is a photograph of my German family. My father was German, German but Jewish. It has an interesting place and date, Berlin 1913, so just one year before the start of the First World War. And I'm sure you're all well aware of the fact that we are now in the last year of commemorating 100 years since that war. Up to December of 2013, there was one person still alive on that photograph, and that was the little girl on - that little girl. Her name was Carla, she lived in New York, and she died in December of 2013, but she had reached the venerable age of 100.
- 3:31 Eva Clarke: I understand this was a family gathering. It was where the whole family gathered every summertime on one of the lakes near Berlin. And the photograph - oh,

the people you are going to see highlighted from that same photograph now - the adults in the background are my grandparents with their three children in the foreground, and my father is the little boy on the right-hand side. Now in 1933, when Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany, all those three children by then were grown up. They were all grown up and they all realized that it would be advisable if they could get out of Germany. And the first one to leave was my Uncle Rolf. He left Germany and first he came to live in Holland, where he met and married a Dutch lady who's also Jewish. And when the Germans invaded Holland they managed to escape to Switzerland, Switzerland being a neutral country during the Second World War. And there my uncle joined this particular army, and I want you to tell me what the uniform is that he's wearing. Come on, what nationality? No. It's American. It's American.

- 4:43 Eva Clarke: And after the War, my uncle was very proud of this photograph. He would say to us, you know, look at me in a GI uniform. In front of, in quotes, my jeep, so they were safe. My father's sister, Marga, she and her husband, and my cousin, they managed to escape Germany quite late in December of 1938. But nevertheless, they still managed to get on a ship that was headed for Sydney in Australia, so they were safe. My cousin was about five years of age at the time but I don't happen to have a photograph of him at that age. Here I think he was graduating from medical studies at Sydney University. And he, I'm glad to say is still alive, he's in his eighties now and still in Sydney.
- 5:25 Eva Clarke: My own father, he left Germany in 1933, and he came to live in Prague, the capital of Czechoslovakia. He thought that was far enough to be safe. It wasn't, but if he hadn't have come to Prague, he wouldn't have met my mother and I would not be standing in front of you today. Now I like to think of this as being my sort of star photograph, I hope you might agree with me by the time you've seen them all. This is a photograph of my parents on their wedding day. They were married on the 15th of May, 1940, which was already under Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia.
- 6:02 Eva Clarke: My father had been an architect and interior designer, and when he first came to Prague he managed to get a job working for a furniture manufacturer, and initially he was employed to build film sets at the Barrandov Film Studios which are still there. My mother had been a law student at the university, but when the Germans invaded they closed all the Czech universities, nobody was allowed to study. So she decided she was going to try to find a job that sort of had more immediate practical use and she decided to become apprenticed to a milliner. Now when I talk in schools in the UK, I think I could say 90% of students have no idea what a milliner is. I imagine that several of you here might know what a milliner is. For those of you who don't know, a milliner is a hat maker. Now you may think that was a rather, a strange thing to go and learn how to do, to go and make hats, but I can assure you that in the 1940s women always wore hats, even as they just went down to the local shops, they'd be sort of properly turned out. So, that was that.
- 7:08 Eva Clarke: Now, as I'm sure a lot of you know when the Germans invaded any country, they immediately imposed various rules and regulations upon Jewish people. And there are hundreds and hundreds of those rules and regulations, and they all come under the general heading of the Nuremberg Laws. I will tell you of a few, just to give you a few examples. First and foremost, Jewish people immediately lost their citizenship, they were no longer allowed to vote. No intermarriage was allowed between Jewish people and those of other faiths. There was a curfew, Jews were not

allowed to go out in the evening. Jewish children were immediately expelled from mainstream schools, they had to go to special schools. Jews were immediately thrown out of the professions, they could no longer be doctors, lawyers, teachers. Jewish people were only allowed to go shopping at certain times of the day, invariably the late afternoon, when there would've been as little fresh produce available as possible. In Prague, there are trams. Jews were only allowed to go on the outside, but not inside undercover. Jewish people were no longer allowed to keep animals, they had to hand them in. They were no longer allowed to keep their cars or their bicycles. They were no longer allowed to keep their telephones or their radios; there were no televisions. They were also forbidden to go to parks, theaters, swimming pools, concerts, cinemas - all those things were forbidden. Their lives were meant to be more and more restricted within their own communities. But because none of these restrictions in itself, initially, was life-threatening, people tended to think you know well if this is the worst it's going to get we can cope with this, we can live with this.

8:49 Eva Clarke: But by the same token, sometimes some people would sort of test these restrictions, very common human reaction. I'm sure you've all experienced it, I know I have. If you are told you know you are forbidden to do something, your gut reaction is to go and do it. Whether you actually do is another matter. And one day my mother decided that she was going to go to the cinema despite the fact that it was forbidden. She was sitting in the cinema watching the film when the Gestapo came in, the secret police. They came in, they stopped the film, and they started to go through the audience row by row looking at their ID papers. And my mother was terrified because she had no idea how they would react when they got to her and when they saw the large J for Jew on her papers. And they got to about halfway through the auditorium and they stopped, but they left the cinema. And they stopped just one row in front of where my mother had been sitting. Boy, did she breathe a sigh of relief. And ever since she told me about this, I was always trying to get her to remember what the hell the film was.

10:02 Eva Clarke: She also would have dearly liked to have known what it was, but it was such a frightening experience, and it was the first, far worse was to come but she didn't know that. It was such a frightening experience that she obviously blanked out that memory, and she never remembered. But what I can tell you is that when we first came to the UK, and when I was safely in school trying to learn English as quickly as possible, I think my mother used to go to the cinema every single day. And it was fantastic light relief for her after her wartime experiences. She just had - she had this need, it was almost like an obsession - to catch up with the frivolous things of life. Now, one of the later restrictions that was imposed upon Jewish people, that I'm sure you know about, was the fact that they had to wear a yellow star, and although this is quite a dark photograph, you can see the stars on their coats.

10:52 Eva Clarke: This is a photograph of my mother's oldest sister, Zdena, and a friend. And I have a genuine yellow star to show you, but because of the filming, I'm not allowed to move around, so if any of you would like to see it, you know, closer afterwards you're very welcome. This is a genuine yellow star, it has the word Jude which means Jew in German. And everybody in her family had to wear a yellow star every time they went outside their own front door. You had to buy as many yellow stars as there were members of the family age 6 and above. And my mother distinctly remembered what she was wearing the first time she ever had to wear one of these. She was wearing a dark green skirt, a tan suede jacket, hats, gloves, and she was

going to the shops. She said it actually didn't look that bad on the suede jacket. But, nevertheless, she was very, very apprehensive. She was very worried as to how people might react to her when she went outside wearing it. But every time my mother went outside wearing the yellow star, nothing ever happened to her. People just ignored it, and that was the best possible use. Nobody pointed at her, nobody laughed at her, nobody was rude to her, nobody spat at her. All those things happened to other people but it never happened to her. We speculated as to why not and all she could think was, she was a young woman, she was full of self-confidence, and she was not going to be cowed, she was not going to be bullied by anybody. And I think the fact that she wasn't a bad looker must have helped.

- 12:22 Eva Clarke: But that first day when she went outside wearing the yellow star for the first time, she met another friend of hers who was also wearing one for the first time. And this friend was very unhappy and very ashamed of having to wear it. And this lady was walking down the road and was sort of bent over double because she was trying to hide it and my mother went up to her and basically gave her a pep talk and said to her, Stand up straight. Be proud to be Jewish. Don't let the bastards get you down. And that was very much my mother's attitude, which helped her enormously. Now there's a second reason why I use this particular photograph, and that is simply to show you that they are smiling. They are smiling because they were out for a walk, obviously, before curfew, they were engaged to be married. They were happy. And I assume at the instant that the photograph was taken, they had forgotten that they were wearing the yellow star with any implication that it might have for them in the future. And very fortunately for them, they had absolutely no idea what was to come and I will tell you about them later.
- 13:22 Eva Clarke: My mother had another sister, and her name was Ruze. Ruze means rose. And this is my Aunt Rose with my cousin, Peter, when he was about five. And the next picture shows Peter a bit older with a photograph of his father, my Uncle Tom. And I just wonder if any of you happen to know what the uniform is that he's wearing? [Unintelligible audience input] Sorry? British, yes. British army uniform. And the reason for that is in 1939, my uncle managed to escape from occupied Czechoslovakia. He got to the UK [United Kingdom], he joined the British Army. He also managed to get a visa for his wife and for his child, but tragically, my aunt refused to come. And the reason she refused to come was because basically it was a very unhappy marriage and she said to her husband she said, no we'll be fine. We'll stay with my parents - with her parents, my grandparents. And that was the attitude I would suggest of most Jewish people in occupied countries. Because initially, nobody had any idea that they might be sent away anywhere, let alone to something called a slave labor camp, a concentration camp, or a death camp. They had no idea, they just thought if they kept a low profile, more or less stuck to those rules and regulations, you know, they'd be okay. That is human nature, you hope for the best.
- 14:36 Eva Clarke: And again, I'll tell you what happened to them later. Also what I wanted to say is, yes, some people escaped. A lot of people came to the United States. Yes, some people were hidden, but they were by far in the minority. Now, this is an aerial photograph of this place called Terezín or Theresienstadt. It's about 40 miles outside of Prague and before the war, it was a garrison town where Czech soldiers were stationed. But when the Germans invaded, the Czech army was disbanded and the Germans turned this place into a ghetto and a concentration camp. And Jewish people from all over Europe were sent there in the thousands. And when I was

growing up and I was asking my mother, you know, how she was taken prisoner because I had various images in my mind: I'd read the diary of Anne Frank, I'd seen films, I'd seen documentaries - and I had this picture in my mind that, you know, perhaps the middle of one night, three o'clock in the morning, there would've been soldiers banging on the doors, soldiers with guns and dogs dragging people out of their beds, and I said to her, you know, Is that what happened to you? And she said, No, nothing like that. She said, we received a card in the post. And the card said that on a certain day, at a certain time, we would have to report to a warehouse in Prague near one of the mainland railway stations. And that's what happened.

15:55 Eva Clarke: At the end of November, the beginning of December 1941, my father received his card and he left. You were told you could take a small suitcase, you were advised to take warm clothing. You were also advised to take a few pots and pans, which indicated to them that they were going somewhere where they'd be able to cook, they'd be able to look after themselves, and they assumed that they were being sent to some sort of labor camp. And a few days later my mother received her card and she left. And not only was she carrying her handbag and her suitcase, but she was also carrying a large cardboard box. It was about that big, it was about that deep, and it was tied together with string. And I said to her, what on earth did you have in the box? You have enough to worry about, enough to carry. And she said, Well, I think I had between two or three dozen donuts in the box. And I said, Why donuts? And she said, well your father liked donuts. And it was a very sensible thing to do, as she had no idea where the next meal was coming from, so she was bringing food, just happened to be donuts. And I said to her, you know, Did they get to him? And she said, Yes, they weren't terribly fresh anymore but they were perfectly edible and he was pleased.

17:03 Eva Clarke: Now my mother had to spend three days and three nights in that warehouse, with hundreds and hundreds of other people. They weren't given much food or water. They had to sleep on the floor. And at the end of those three days, they were marched to the railway station and the route was lined with young German officers - 18, 20-year-olds. And there was one young German officer who knew he had a bit of power, and he wielded it. He didn't harm my mother physically, he was just a bit sarcastic with words. I don't know if any of you, I'm sure a lot of you might speak German, I will say what he said in German, I will then translate it. I apologize for the swear word but it's what he said. This soldier could see that my mother was having great problems, not only carrying her luggage but mainly carrying the box with the donuts. Certainly cake boxes haven't changed much, at least in England, they're still made with cardboard, although nowadays they're tied with ribbon, not with string. And after three days, the moisture from the donuts was making the cardboard soften, so the whole box was coming adrift, it was coming apart. And this soldier could see this was happening, she was having problems with it, and he said to her, Es ist schiße [unclear] die Schachtel mit kommt. Which means, I couldn't give a dot dot dot (...) if that box goes with you or not. Implying that it wasn't going to do her much good where she was going.

18:24 Eva Clarke: Now he couldn't have had any idea whatsoever what was going to happen to her, all he knew was that it wasn't going to be anything good, and metaphorically speaking, he just wanted to twist the knife. But she ignored him, she got on the train, she arrives in Terezín. I'm now going to show you two drawings of Terezín because I think they're more evocative of the sort of place that it was at the

time. These drawings were done secretly by professional artists, who themselves were prisoners. And these drawings were discovered after the end of the war, quite by chance. They were discovered buried under the floorboards and in cracks in the walls. And I use this particular one to try and give you the impression of a very crowded place. Because before the war when it was a Czech Garrison Town, there would've been a few thousand soldiers stationed there. But during the war, when it was a ghetto and a concentration camp, there were thousands and thousands, and thousands of people crammed into very, very crowded conditions, and on the inside, it looked like this.

- 19:27 Eva Clarke: People basically lived on bunks. They would try to make a niche, a den for themselves, with a few personal belongings that they had been able to bring. And when families first arrived in Terezín, that is the first time that those families would have been split up. So, men were sent to one part, women to another part, elderly people to another part, children to yet another part. They were able to meet up sometimes during the day, but to a large extent, they lead separate lives. And when my mother arrived in Terezín, she was fortunate enough to be given a job; Jobs weren't paid or anything, but life was a bit easier if you had a job. And her job was working for the man who had the responsibility for sharing out the food. There wasn't much food there, but what there was, they tried to share out in a fair fashion. And that meant that she had access to food. And when I say that she had access to food, she would steal. She would steal a potato, a carrot, an onion. Just something with which to make a more substantial soup. And that was literally of vital importance because at one time my mother had the responsibility, every single day, for trying to find food for fifteen members of her close family. Every single day, that was her main worry; how on earth was she going to find enough food for all those people? And that was quite apart from the greater worry, as to what on earth was going to happen to them all in the future.
- 20:50 Eva Clarke: And amongst the people, she was trying to find food for, were her parents, my grandparents, Ida and Stanislav. And the next picture shows my father, as a young man, with his mother, Selma. And the next picture shows his father, my grandfather, Louis. Now, my grandfather, Louis was the only one of my four grandparents to have survived the war, and we believe there is a specific reason for that, although we don't actually have any proof. I mentioned at the beginning that my father was German, his father was German. In the First World War, my grandfather was in the German army. In the First World War, my grandfather was given the Iron Cross First Class. That is the highest military honor that the Germans bestow upon their soldiers. What happens to him in the Second World War? He's thrown into a concentration camp and most of his family is killed.
- 21:41 Eva Clarke: My grandfather was not sent East. To be sent East was a euphemism, another way of saying you're gonna be sent to the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp. He remained in Terezín throughout the war. And at the end of the war, he was found to be alive, just about. And via the Red Cross, contact was made between him and my uncle and aunt, who by that stage, had returned from Switzerland to Holland. And one day there was a knock on the door and it was my grandfather in the rags that he stood up in, and he lived with them for the rest of his life. And when I was a little girl, we used to go and visit them quite often, and it was very sad because I would come into the room and my grandfather couldn't see me, because he had been blinded by the gas in the First World War. And he couldn't speak to me, because he spoke German

and Dutch and I only spoke Czech and English. But nevertheless, I'd come into the room, I'd give him a kiss, and say hello grandfather. And he knew that I was the only surviving child in the family. Now the next photograph, I'm sure, is familiar to you. It shows you the gateway to the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp in Poland.

22:44 Eva Clarke: But before I start that part of the story, I have to tell you about two other things that happened to my parents in Terezín. To a large extent, Terezín was a transit camp for the death camps because there were various categories of people who would've been sent to Auschwitz to their deaths quite quickly. And amongst those groups of people would've been the old, the sick, mothers with children, pregnant women, the mentally disabled, the physically disabled, they would've been sent to their deaths quite quickly. But because my parents were young, strong, and well capable of work, so they remained in Terezín for three years. That was a remarkably long, very unusually long period of time. And my mother said, luck had an awful lot to do with it. But, at the end of September of 1944, their luck ran out because it was on that day that my father was sent to Auschwitz. And incredibly, my mother actually volunteered to follow him the very next day. And the reason she volunteered to follow him was because she had no idea where he'd been sent. And being the eternal optimist, she thought well, as they had survived three years up to that point, she thought well nothing could get any worse. Little did she know, but she thought nothing could get any worse, they would survive.

24:03 Eva Clarke: But in fact, she never, ever saw my father again. And she heard from an eyewitness after the war, quite soon after the war, that my father had actually been shot dead near Auschwitz on a death march on the 18th of January, 1945. And as I'm sure you know, it was liberated by the Russians on the 27th of January, 1945. And that is why certainly, I'm not sure about here, but certainly, in Europe, we commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day on the 27th of January. Now the other thing I have to tell you about is, I'm sure you'll appreciate, rather important because it concerns my conception. And my brother's conception. I mentioned the fact that when families first came into Terezín, the sexes were segregated. Well, in 1943, my mother discovered that she was actually pregnant, and when I was about - I don't know - 12, 13, no doubt when it would've been at its most embarrassing, well I'm sure you'll agree it's embarrassing at any age, I said to her, how come you got pregnant, you weren't with my father and she replied in a very clever way. She said, well, it was very, very, very dangerous. But your father and I got together as and when we could, and to hell with the consequences. End of story. But it was not the end of the story and it had very, very serious consequences because to become pregnant in a concentration camp was considered, by the Nazis, to be a crime punishable by death. Because they were trying to annihilate, they were trying to murder every single member of the Jewish race.

25:49 Eva Clarke: They couldn't prevent women coming into the camps pregnant. But the reason for the segregation was so that they could not become pregnant while there. And when the Nazis discovered that my mother, and four other women, were also pregnant, they made these five couples sign a document that said that when the babies were born they would have to be handed over to be killed. Except they didn't use the word kill, they used the word euthanasia. My mother had never heard the word euthanasia. She had to go and ask somebody what it meant. If you look it up in a dictionary it'll say something like mercy killing, this was not - would not have been mercy killing, this would have been murder. In the event the other four babies were

born, we don't actually know what happened to those families, we think they all perished in Auschwitz. When my brother Jiří, Jiří means George. He was born in February of 1944. He was not taken away from my parents, but he actually died of pneumonia two months later. And his death meant my life and my mother's. Because had my mother arrived in the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp holding my brother in her arms, she would've been sent straight to the gas chambers. But because she arrived in Auschwitz not holding my brother, and although she was pregnant again, this time with me, nobody knew - she knew but nobody else knew - and it didn't show because it was very, very early on. So again, she lived to see another day.

- 27:20 Eva Clarke: I'm sure that you have seen lots of images of Auschwitz, of the horrendous train journeys the people were put through to get there - in fact, I'll ask of you, because I'm interested as well - have any of you seen *Schindler's List* or *The Pianist*? Yes? Okay. Well, when *Schindler's List* first came out, my mother was given a private showing of it with another survivor and she was interviewed afterwards and asked her opinion. Opinions vary, but in her opinion, she felt at least the scenes within the camp, she felt they were so true to life. She felt as though she'd been transported back to those days, those times, and those conditions. And when we came out of seeing *The Pianist* together, she was actually trembling. Now I don't know if a book which is much read in English schools - or British schools - is also read here, do you know *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*? Right, okay, well because most, certainly the younger people nowadays know that book as opposed to those other two films. And what I would like to say about that is, it's a good book, it's a good film, but as I'm sure you'll appreciate, there's a very big but. Absolutely nothing in the book or the film could've happened, because it was based on a false premise. Because that little Jewish boy who is meant to be about eight years of age, he never would have survived a death camp more than a few hours or a day the most. And also he would've never met the little German boy. But John Boyne, the author, he was not writing a historical document, he was writing a novel. He was writing fiction, and as such, I think it does have its place. But if young people come and say this is exactly what happened, no it is not.
- 29:15 Eva Clarke: So the train journeys. People were herded into these cattle trucks. They were so crowded that people couldn't sit down. They were given no food and no water and, sometimes, these journeys took several days. There were no toilet facilities, there might've been a bucket which would've been totally inadequate very quickly. So by the time the trains actually arrived in Auschwitz, invariably the people inside of them would've been in a very poor mental and physical condition. Especially the elderly and the children. Have any of you been to Auschwitz? Auschwitz itself consisted of several different camps. Auschwitz one was brick-built and that is where all the Polish prisoners were sent and that is where today it is not only a place of memorial but also a museum where you have the collections. The collections of luggage, the collections of hair, the collections of spectacles, collections of pots and pans, all those things. But this, Auschwitz Two, Auschwitz-Birkenau, this is a place purely of memorial. This is where all the Jews were sent and where all the Gypsies were sent. And this photograph was taken at the end of the war. The next photograph shows you what it looks like today, behind that gateway. This is a vast area, right back to the tree line that would've been filled with wooden huts, such as you can see in the foreground. But because Auschwitz-Birkenau was not preserved in any way until

many years later, most of those wooden huts just disintegrated or the wood was stolen as firewood after the war.

- 30:48 Eva Clarke: But what you can see in the distance - those uprights - make for a very poignant, a very sad memorial to all those thousands and thousands of people who died, who were killed there. Because those uprights are brick chimneys. They are nothing whatsoever to do with the crematoria, but they are brick chimneys. Because inside each hut, you would have two of those chimneys - that sort of height - and they'd be joined together by a brick tunnel and there's a grate at either end and the idea was that you'd have fuel that you'd burn in the grate and the heat generated would pass along the tunnel thereby giving warmth to the hut. But of course, they weren't given any fuel. Their lives were meant to be too uncomfortable. So as I said, it's a very poignant memorial to all those people who died there.
- 31:32 Eva Clarke: As I'm sure you know, when the trains arrived in Auschwitz, that is the first time that the people on them had to go through what was called a selection. And selection always meant life or death. And my mother got through a selection because she was still considered to be strong enough for work and this was, you know, despite the fact that she had been somewhat malnourished during the previous three years. To give you an idea of my mother's physical strength, when she was 14 years of age, she was school's junior backstroke swimming champion of Czechoslovakia - that gives you an idea of her physical strength. And she always maintained that, if this whole experience had to happen to her, she was at the right age, not only physically, but psychologically and emotionally, she was in her mid-twenties, she was tough, she was strong. So she gets through a selection, and the people who did, various procedures happened to them. First, they were told if they managed to bring any luggage with them, to put their suitcases on the ground, to write their names on them, they would be reunited with them later - well of course they weren't. They then were sent into real showers, well at this stage they had absolutely no idea at all that anything other than a real shower existed, i.e. a gas chamber. They then had all their hair shaved. They then were given that sort of striped uniform and a pair of shoes, if they were lucky.
- 32:53 Eva Clarke: And then they were tattooed, with a number on their arms. And after that, they were sent into these huts. And on the inside, it looked like this. These huts were incredibly crowded. Some of them before the war might've been stables that would've housed say 60 or 70 horses. But at the time that I'm talking about, they housed hundreds and hundreds of people. 500, 800, even up to 1,000 people. And when my mother and her friends arrived in a hut like this, they were so frightened and so bewildered, they just could not work out what this place was. And they said to the women there, what happens here, what goes on here, when will we see our families again? And the women actually laughed at them, because they couldn't understand that anyone arriving in Auschwitz would have no idea what went on there. And they said, well we'll all go up in smoke and you'll never see your families again. And in that instant, they knew what went on there. People were given hardly any sustenance on a daily basis. They were given a liquid in the morning, which was called coffee, and they were given another liquid in the evening which was called soup, and if they were very lucky perhaps they might've been able to dredge up the odd potato peeling from the bottom of the bucket. And they were given one piece of bread. And that is all they were given, so an awful lot of people were just died of starvation and you'd often wake up in the morning to find corpses on either side of you.

- 34:18 Eva Clarke: Now apart from the selections that happened every day, the other thing that happened at least twice daily was called the *Appell*. *Appell* means registration, sounds like a very mild sort of word, doesn't it? I think you'll might of had to register to come here, I don't know, but anyway, what it actually meant was that every day, at 4 o'clock in the morning and at 6 o'clock in the evening, everybody would have to stand outside their hut to be counted. And if the numbers didn't tally, they would just have to stand there till they did or until there was some sort of explanation. And my mother said it was very, very hard to stand, stock still, for hours and hours and hours on end, regardless the weather. And you try to keep as low a profile as you could because you had no idea how the Nazis might react to you if for some reason you drew attention to yourself. And my mother actually fainted, several times, during these *Appells* and that could've been very bad news for her. But she was always so relieved to find that when she came round, to find that she was actually being held up by her friends on either side which meant that she hadn't slipped to the ground, she hadn't drawn attention to herself, and again, she lived to see another day.
- 35:30 Eva Clarke: The next picture will show you a selection. In the far distance, that long row of people, they are walking to the gas chambers, to their deaths, but they don't know that. In the foreground, the longer row of people are men, the shorter row women. And they are walking towards a group of Nazi officers where they will be selected for their life or for death. And my mother distinctly remembered one of these selections, where Dr. Mengele was presiding, she only found out it was Dr. Mengele after the war. He was presiding and she said it was a terrifying experience because she guessed what was happening. And she heard him say, *dieses mal sehr gutes Material*, which means this time we have very good material in front of us. Not people, units of slave labor. They did not consider the people in front of them as being human beings.
- 36:30 Eva Clarke: Now, all the rest of my family except for my one grandfather and my own parents - so my three other grandparents, my two aunts, my cousin Peter, and most of the other members of my extended family - they were all sent to Auschwitz a long time before my own parents were. And when they arrived there, none of those initial procedures took place. They were able to keep their luggage, their clothes, they weren't shaved, they weren't tattooed. And they were sent to what was called a *familienlager*, that meant a family camp, all it meant was that one or two of those huts had families together. And there was just one very cynical reason why, and that was so that they could be forced to write postcards home. And my aunt, the lady wearing the yellow star in that earlier photograph, she wrote this postcard to her cousin, who still happened to be in Prague. And I want you to try to remember the first name of this lady, I will now put up the German text. Some of you may be able to read it. And I will read you the English translation.
- 37:30 Eva Clarke: It starts off with the words *meine Lieben* I'm here my dear ones. I'm here with my husband, my sister, and my nephew. All are well and in good health. My husband received a parcel yesterday from our housekeeper and I would ask you to confirm this to her. Please also thank Gerdie. Could she greet Boža for us? I hope you're well and happy. Your parents were very well at the time of our departure. Write soon. Peter looks well - Peter's my eight-year-old cousin - Peter looks well and looks forward to receiving news from you. Greetings and kisses, yours Zdena. Now I imagine that you will agree with me that that basically sounds like you know having a wonderful time, wish you were here. [Audience laughs]. And my aunt was desperate

to get a message out in code. She got the message out, it was understood, it was acted upon. Several of you may have already noticed what the word was. The postcards had to be written in German so the Germans could censor them. In the top left-hand corner, you can see the sender's full name, Sidonie Isidor, she's married that man in the first photograph. Underneath that is her birthday, the 21st of March, 1904. Underneath that it says Birkenau. Does anybody remember the first name of the lady to whom it was sent? [Audience murmurs Olga] Olga. The word Olga does not feature. Where the word Olga should be is the word Lechem, which is not German. What language? Hebrew. [Audience murmurs Hebrew.] And what does it mean? [Audience murmurs bread.] Bread. And my aunt was telling her cousin that they were starving. Her cousin understood, her cousin sent a parcel, but the contents of it would've been stolen long before it got anywhere near them.

39:11 Eva Clarke: And I'm afraid I have to tell you that even before the postcard was sent, from Auschwitz to Prague, they were all dead. All of them were dead. And I have just actually donated this postcard to the Imperial War Museum Holocaust Galleries in London. And I'm very glad I'm no longer responsible for it. Now, my mother was sent out of Auschwitz. She was sent to a slave labor camp, to an armaments factory in a place called Freiburg, which is fairly close to Dresden in Germany. Where she was made to work on this. And what's this? Do you know? [Crosstalk] Yeah, the V-1. It was the unmanned flying bomb. And when my mother and the other women arrived in this factory in Freiburg, the very first impression that they had was one of bed bugs. The place was crawling. On the floor, on the walls, on the ceiling. And they were delighted. Why? [Unintelligible audience answers]. You're very close. They didn't have to eat them, but it meant there was some food there, not much, but there was some. It also meant there was warmth there. And they very quickly ascertained that there were no gas chambers there.

40:03 Speaker 1: The V-1.

40:35 Eva Clarke: After a few days, they weren't quite so pleased when the bugs started to bite them, but after what they had been through in Auschwitz, it was negligible. Unknown to my mother, she was to spend the next six months in Freiburg. That is from October of 1944 to the end of March, the beginning of April of 1945. And as I'm sure you know, the end of the war in Europe was the 8th of May. And during those six months, she was becoming progressively more and more starved and more and more obviously pregnant. Which was very, very dangerous for her. But fortunately, none of the Germans realized she was pregnant. Because had they done so, they might well have sent her back to Auschwitz to be killed. We do know of cases where that did happen, and Mengele took the most unspeakable revenge on them because he'd felt they got away with it. But, they did not send my mother back, or when they discovered it, it was - you know Auschwitz had already been liberated. And during the six months that my mother was in Freiburg, that is when the Allied bombing raids of Dresden took place. I'm sure you know about the Dresden raids, it's been a lot of controversy about them since the War, but I hope that you will appreciate that in this particular context I'm talking to you from my mother's very, very personal perspective.

41:48 Eva Clarke: And from her perspective, the raids were just fantastic. What happened when the air raids started was, the Germans locked all the prisoners in the factory, and they went to the air-raid shelters. And the prisoners, even though they knew the next bomb could fall on them and kill a lot of them, nevertheless they were very

pleased because they realized it was the Allies and they hoped and prayed that it wouldn't be too much longer before they were actually rescued. And this is where my father-in-law comes into the story very, very, very indirectly. And do any of you know what this uniform is? [Audience murmurs] What nationality first of all? British. And what is it? You have three guesses: Army, Navy, or Air Force? RAF [Royal Air Force] yeah. My father-in-law, Kenneth Clarke, he was in the RAF. He was a navigator. He was in bomber command, and he was on the Dresden Raids. And after the war when he first met my mother - well a long time after the war - when my husband and I got engaged and the two families got together, and when he heard my mother tell what had happened to her, he was absolutely devastated at the thought that he could've actually killed her. Which he could've done.

42:57 Eva Clarke: The next picture sometimes is clear, and sometimes isn't. Well, it's sort of. It's the front cover of his logbook. It reads, Royal Air Force Navigator's, Air Bomber's, and Air Gunner's flying logbook flight Lieutenant Clarke. And the next picture shows a page from his logbook. And you will now see a line highlighted from that page and it reads: on the 13th of the 2nd '45 - the 13th of February, 1945 - 1740 hours - 20 to 6 in the evening - Lancaster - that was the airplane. And on the right-hand side the word Dresden. So, he really could've killed her. But he didn't. At the end of March, the beginning of April 1945, this is when the Germans - realizing they were losing the war - this is when they began to evacuate the camps. They were trying to empty the camps of living witnesses as to what had been going on inside them. And this is when the notorious death marches happened. My mother wasn't on a death march, but she was put on yet another train. But this time it didn't consist of cattle trucks. This time it consisted of coal wagons. Open to the skies and filthy. And would've looked something like this.

44:07 Eva Clarke: My mother was on a train like this for 17 days, with no food and hardly any water. And after the war, when similar trains were discovered and opened up, they were discovered to just have piles of corpses in them. And during this 17-day nightmare of a journey, the train was stopped, doors were opened, dead bodies were thrown out, and a farmer walked by where my mother was and he saw her and he had such a shock. She always said she could never forget the expression on his face. She described herself as looking like a scarcely living, pregnant skeleton. She weighed 70 pounds. And she was nine months pregnant. And this farmer brought her a glass of milk, but there was a Nazi officer standing next to her and he had a whip, and he raised his whip to shoulder height as if to beat her if she accepted the glass of milk. But he didn't, he lowered his arm and he let her have the glass of milk. She maintained that saved her life, who knows, perhaps it did.

45:14 Eva Clarke: And the train went on. And it eventually arrived in this place called Mauthausen. Mauthausen itself is a beautiful village on the banks of the Danube in Austria, near Linsk. The concentration camp was up the very steep hill, behind the village. And when my mother saw the name Mauthausen at the station, she had such a shock. Because as opposed to when she arrived in Auschwitz, not knowing what that was, this time she knew because she had heard about this appalling place very early on in the war. And she said the shock was so great that she always thought that it probably, possibly provoked the onset of her labor. And she started to give birth to me on that coal wagon. She had to climb off the coal wagon, unaided. She had to climb onto a cart because the prisoners who were not strong enough to walk up the steep hill to the camp, they had to get onto a cart and it was pulled up by others.

- 46:09 Eva Clarke: She had people lying all over her. People with typhus and typhoid fever. And she proceeded to give birth to me. And there was another Nazi officer who saw that she was in the midst of child labor and he said to her, du kannst weiter schreien which means, you can carry on screaming, cause presumably she had been and she always maintained that she was screaming not only because she was in labor, but because she thought this was her very last minute on this earth. She thought she was about to die. But we both survived the experience. I was born, I didn't move, I didn't breathe. Incredibly, the Germans allowed a doctor to come to my mother. The doctor who was also a prisoner, and presumably the Germans allowed it because they could hear the guns in the distance. And the doctor came, he cut the umbilical cord and he smacked me to make me cry, to make me breathe. And there are three reasons why we survived. And the first is a very chilling one: on the 28th of April, 1945, the Germans had run out of gas for the gas chamber. My birthday is the 29th. So presumably, had the train arrived on the 26th or the 27th, again I wouldn't be here today.
- 47:23 Eva Clarke: The second indirect reason is because Hitler committed suicide on the 30th of April. And the last and the best reason, and I do occasionally speak to American soldiers and I usually cry at this point, was because the American Army liber- the 11th Armored Division liberated the camp about four days later. My mother said she wouldn't have lasted much longer. They think I weighed three pounds. A three-pound baby nowadays is put straight into an incubator. There were no incubators. Or perhaps I had the best incubator, my mother just held me all the time. The- the Americans came, they had food and they had medicine, but as I'm sure you know, it is very very dangerous to give starved people food because their bodies just cannot take it. And my mother spoke fluent English and she tried to tell as many people as possible who didn't what the Americans were saying to her. And they were saying to eat very, very slowly, and very small amounts. But you can imagine, can't you, that if you'd been starved for months and years and suddenly you're handed an American chocolate Hershey bar, well you tend to scoff the lot and an awful lot of people at that stage collapsed and died. But one hopes that perhaps, some of them, a few of them might have realized that they were actually free.
- 48:45 Eva Clarke: The main form of torture in Mauthausen was the fact that prisoners had to work all daylight hours in a stone quarry. And those are people on the left-hand side. They are carrying large blocks of stone that they've had to dig out of the quarry. And again, you have to remember that these are not strong - young, strong, able-bodied people, these are prisoners who have been starved and tortured for months and years. And so many of them died or were killed on those steps that the prisoners themselves nicknamed them the stairway of death. They are very steep, I have seen them, I've even been on them. The next picture shows after liberation. When some of the prisoners were strong enough, they're pulling down the Nazi emblem. The eagle with the Swastika underneath.
- 49:27 Eva Clarke: Now after about three weeks, when my mother was strong enough to travel, the Americans asked her if she wanted to be repatriated to Prague. She did. And so we were put on yet another train, an ordinary train this time. We arrived back in Prague, it was at night, and it was dark. And my mother said that was the worst moment of her three and a half years incarceration in camps. Because up until that moment, she'd never allowed herself to think as to what had probably happened to all the rest of the family. She just never let herself think about it. But you know, arriving at

your home station, you wonder if there might be anybody there to meet you, and of course, there wasn't. But nevertheless, she still had a vestige of optimism at the back of her mind and she thought that if any other member of the family had survived, there was a chance that it might be her cousin, the lady who received the postcard. And indeed she had. Because my Aunt Olga, she- she had come back from Terezín. She was in Terezín for the last six months of the war, and she had come back to Prague a few days before we came from Mauthausen.

50:32 Eva Clarke: And my aunt had even heard on the grapevine that my mother had survived and that incredibly, she had a baby. My mother asked somebody to give us some money to go on the tram, we arrived at my aunt's flat, and my mother was a very practical woman and the first words she said to my aunt were, we haven't got any lice. Well, we were riddled with lice, and we had scabies, which I think we had. And the second thing she said was, please could we stay for a few days to recover? Well, we actually stayed for three years. And that was fantastic because we had our own family support group. It was a tiny family because we were almost the only survivors from what had been a very large extended family, and because my mother was given closure quite soon after the end of the War when she was told of the death of my father, so three years later she was able to consider a new life and a new marriage. And this is where my stepfather comes into the story. And for the last time tell me what the uniform is.

51:37 Eva Clarke: So? What is it? British, and? It's RAF. Royal Air Force. My father, like my uncle, he managed to escape Czechoslovakia in 1939, he got to the UK. He was too - he joined the RAF - he was too old to be trained as a pilot, but because he spoke languages, he was made an official interpreter. And after the war, he came back to Prague to pick up the pieces of his family, most of whom had also been killed in Auschwitz. And he met my mother, whom he had known as a family friend before the war. And they decided to get married and they also decided to leave because this was now 1948 and that is when the communists took over, and they did not want to live under communist regime. And so, we left Czechoslovakia in '48, and we came to the UK, and although we came legally, I would like to stress, we might've come as refugees. We might've come as asylum seekers. We might've come as migrants, immigrants. We arrived in the UK, and because my father - my stepfather, well I call him my father because he officially adopted me, he was my daddy - he managed to get a job in South Wales. And it's all because of Bob's father that I grew up in South Wales, but that's another whole story, and we can tell you about it in a minute.

52:59 Eva Clarke: We arrived in Cardiff and my father had a job there in this textile factory, and that's where we settled. We were actually headed for Montreal but Robert's family persuaded daddy to stay in Cardiff. And guess who? I know I've changed just a bit [audience laughs]. I don't have plaits anymore. Well, I do have the plaits but they're a different color. As you can see, this is a very happy picture. We're on our way to my first school prize-giving, where my mother shed a lot of tears, well all parents [unclear] shed tears at prize-givings. But I think she might've cried a bit more because unknown to her, I was about to receive the prize for reading, and I hadn't spoken a word of English several months before. But again, I'm sure you know, little children learn other languages very quickly. And then when people say to me, what did she look like in the more recent times - so I don't know if - this may mean something to some of you because when I'm talking in English schools, I say to them, so tell me where we are. So when I put up the next question I will still ask the question, some of you may know.

So, where are we? Any ideas? [Audience murmurs]. Yes, we're on the London Eye. When the London Eye opened, I asked my mother what she would like to do that year as a birthday treat. She was then 85, and she said, Well everybody's going on this London Eye, I want to go. So, we did, and she thoroughly enjoyed it.

- 54:27 Eva Clarke: And this is my mother ten years later, on her 95th - not bad for 95, huh? And my almost, well, yeah - my last picture - this is my 4 generation photograph. I have two sons and they have 3, now 4, children between them. And my mother could never get over the fact that she had survived her wartime experiences - I survived - and that she ended her life with three great-grandchildren. [Audience claps]
- 55:12 Eva Clarke: Thank you, but bear with me for one more minute, because I'd like to tell you why I tell the story. I tell the story first of all for reasons of commemoration. To remember, to remember all those millions and millions of people who died, who were killed, in the Holocaust. The second reason is to tell one family's story, because as many as there are survivors, and as you know they are a dwindling group nowadays, there are that many different stories and they are all unique. They may have common elements, but they're all unique. The third reason is to try and enable us all to learn the lessons, but just think about all the genocide since Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda, Darfur, now it's happening in the Middle East or Myanmar. And the last reason is to try to counteract racism and prejudice. Any form of racism and prejudice. What I would like to ask of you now, I'd like you to relax first of all, for a couple of minutes and if you would like to ask me any questions afterwards, I'll be happy to answer them if I can, and I would like to thank you very much for listening.
- 56:31 [Against All Odds: Born in Mauthausen / May 30, 2018]
- 56:33 [Featuring / Eva Clarke / Holocaust Survivor]
- 56:37 [Presented by The Holocaust Living History Workshop / Deborah Hertz, Ph.D. Director, The Jewish Studies Program UC San Diego / Susanne Hillman Program Coordinator The Holocaust Living History Workshop]
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