

From the Testimony of Judith Becker about Being Tattooed in Auschwitz-Birkenau

That's when they took us to be tattooed. See, we had already been in Birkenau - they didn't take us to be tattooed. And the tattooing took place in a barrack that had nothing in it except three tables in front and at each of these tables was a Jewish prisoner woman with the emblem "*Schreiberin*" - anything having to do with paperwork used to be called "*Schreiberin*". Any secretarial, any record, anything at all was called either a "Schreiber" or a "*Schreiberin*". And these girls did the tattooing and we had to line up in three rows and there were about, to each row there were....we were in the usual fives, but as we got closer to the tables we were one by one, you know? Now I wanted to get consecutive numbers. For some reason I felt that that would be a big insurance in staying together, if we had consecutive numbers. And I had no idea how the numbers were distributed. We were somewhere in the back of the room and I couldn't see and I couldn't ask and I couldn't figure out whether they were going "one, two, three" or each one had his own set of numbers. And so I kept sneaking up towards the front to find out. And they spotted me - you know, there were guards in the room - they spotted me and they started to hit me and I went back again, until I found out that they were going one, two, three. At that point, we stayed together in the same row. I managed to get to the centre row and as we came closer to the table we spread out one, two, three. This was a lot of effort and very, very dangerous. So we got the numbers consecutively, but each one was done by a different hand. And we were very lucky that all three of these girls must have had either a lot of practice or they had some skill because we have, all three of us, attractive - "attractive" - they're even, they're on the inside, not here on the outside and most of all, they are not, you know, uneven, one is here and one is there, there are all in a row, and that took skill. So that I was so absorbed by this trying to get consecutive numbers that I didn't really feel the pain of the needles as they were tattooing us. So that was finished. Now we are happy, we are on the transport, we have consecutive numbers and they tell us they're

going to take us to Auschwitz. "Take us to Auschwitz" means walking from Birkenau to....Now, what we didn't know - you see, the things that you don't know in a camp can kill you - that the selection to Auschwitz which occurred periodically, whenever Auschwitz came below a certain number. Auschwitz, as I mentioned to you before, always kept its population the same number. When they killed a certain number of people in Auschwitz they replenished it from other camps.

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