When Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, Assia Ardermann’s family was living in Kodyma, a village in the Odessa region of Ukraine. On August 3, Wehrmacht and SS soldiers began shooting Jewish men. After Assia’s father escaped one execution, he fled with her to a nearby village to hide, but they were discovered and forced by the SS into a ditch to be shot dead along with other Jews. Miraculously, they both survived, faking death until dark and then escaped from the pile of dead bodies and we escaped.

Assia is now 88 and lives in Berlin. She is widowed and severely disabled with a weak heart and arthritis that makes mobility a challenge. Some of her conditions are a consequence of the harsh conditions she suffered under Nazi occupation. A monthly pension from the Claims Conference Article 2 Fund helps her pay for expenses and eases some of her financial stress.