

# Sara Mittelman Interview

## November 7, 1999

My first question is what was your name when you were born?

**My name is Sara Mendelsson. Like the composer Mendelssohn – spelled the same without the “H”.**

Okay.

**The “sohn” without the H.**

Okay, and when were you born?

**I was, I am not aware. I was born in '20, 1920. An old lady...**

What city were you born in, or town?

**Pilica. P-I-L-I-C-A.**

Is that in Poland?

**Poland.**

Okay. Do you know if you were born at home or in a hospital?

**I was born home, because it was a small town so I don't know if they had hospitals those years. But I remember my mother with the other children. I had two brothers and a sister and they were all born at home. Even I was little, but I remember that.**

Were you the youngest?

**I was the oldest.**

Oh, you were the oldest.

**I was the oldest.**

Okay. What were your brothers' and sister's names?

**My sister's name was Mania. M-A-N-I-A. My brother's name was Moishe, and the little brother was Mendel. M-E-N-D-E-L.**

Okay. And what were your parent's names?

**My mother's name was Mirla. M-I-R-L-A. And my father's name was Ephraim.**

Ephraim. Did your parents have traditional roles in the home, did your Mom stay home and cook and your Dad work?

**Yes, my mother stayed home. And she cooked, and she bought groceries' and she did, she did everything. And my father was working for a living.**

What did he do?

**He had a little store, a candy store. And um...**

How much younger was Mania?

**Mania was three years younger than I am.**

Three years. And Moishe?

**Moishe was three years younger than my, than my sister. Then my little brother was four younger than my brother. So we were all...and my father, you'd be surprised when I was born, I was the first one, my father was 52 years old. This was his second marriage to my mother. My mother was younger. My mother came from a family from ten children. She was the oldest, and her parents and my father, being her husband were the same age. It happens now too. It happens pretty often. They had ten children, they want marry off the oldest daughter, they married her off to an older gentlemen.**

What kind of neighborhood did you live in?

**We lived....this was a small town and where we lived, for example a block away was a church. And I think this was the only church, a Catholic Church...it was mostly what Catholics in our hometown. And there was the Church and we had synagogues. It was one main synagogue and then they had, everybody was religious, of course. Nobody drove *shabbos*. We didn't have cars to drive. But nobody drove *shabbos* and we all had kosher, we all ate kosher food. We didn't what it means not to eat kosher. And there were like *shtiebels* they called them like they call the little *shtetl*, that was little gatherings, like they had a house, a bigger house. So, there was a gathering, they *daven*, they *davened* twice a day, in the morning, communion, and the evening.**

So they didn't really have a synagogue?

**They....yeah, we did have a big synagogue.**

Oh, okay.

**They have a synagogue which for the holidays, but they had little *shteibels* that they call it for more religious people – for prayers with those long garments. Do you know something about Judaism religion?**

Sure.

Okay, so this was.....they called it *shteibels* so the more religious people, like my father went to the synagogue, twice a day to *daven*. And then there were people that stay, like the [unclear] let's say, and they went to those *shteibels* and they *davened* more.

What was the inside of your home like?

What kind of house we had? We happened to have a nice house that's why my mother probably got married to my father, because he had a little more wealth. We had a house with three rooms. We had like a living room-dining room together, a kitchen, and a bedroom. They raised four children. I don't know how they did it. Now I think everybody has to have a bedroom, and everybody has to have a bathroom. But those years somehow people raised children when they came out good kids. So, that's where we had, and my mother was, you know, when it came like example to washing clothes, they didn't have washing machines. There were no washing machines here too those years, I'm sure. So they had, I remember it was a day in the week that a woman used to come in and they had to bring in water from outside. And they had to heat the water on the stoves and it was a whole thing - to wash clothes was two days' work. They came, I remember early in the morning, this woman use to come and she washed - they had this board. What you call it? Washboard.

Washboard.

Washboard. And they washed [unclear] on that and they boiled the clothes. I don't know why, to make it real clean. And then I remember overnight they put it in this big pot that they washed the clothes. They put in cold water with blue, blue color, you know blue to make the clothes white. Because all the shirts, and all the linens everything was white. So it made it whiter. And that's how they washed. We didn't have refrigerators, of course. So, everyday they went to the butcher shop and bought meat for the day. They cooked everyday, so to make a meal it was a whole day thing. They went to the butcher then they came home and they koshered the meat. You know, it took... Koshering takes two hours. They had to soak it, and then to salt it.

So there wasn't a kosher butcher to buy from?

It was kosher, all of it was kosher. But the meat has to be kosher. After you buy kosher meat it's not kosher yet.

Oh, okay.

Because like they....now you go to Jacobson's for example and you buy hamburger. They have to kosher the meat before they grind it. They salt it, they soak it, and wash it and then they grind it.

Okay.

Oh, you didn't know it. Kosher meat doesn't mean that it's kosher already. It's kosher killed, but then you have to make it kosher.

So you were considered pretty well off because you had people coming into the house and helping?

**I wouldn't say pretty good but we made a living. We made a living, because to wash from two weeks, there was lots of clothes for six people. So, my mother couldn't do it by herself, so between times she washed a little bit, you know, two or three pieces or whatever she needed. But the big thing was a whole day, a whole day and a second day half a day.**

Okay.

**And I remember my mother use to iron. She was a ironer, she ... everything has to be with starches, stiff and beautiful. You know, it was considered in our small town, not just in our small town, I think in the whole Poland – there were big cities like Warsaw maybe they had it better. You know, bigger cities have more, more things to do. But in small towns, like we come from, the people made a living, it considered good. There are people they couldn't buy, you know, even we couldn't buy everything that we want to. We had, you know when you have nobody was rich I don't think. When you have \$10.00 to go buy groceries, so you figure out like some people here with a computer and they figure out how much they can buy? That's how it was. Before you went to the grocery they figured out what they can afford this week. So they bought this and the rest of it they bought next week or they don't have it or they didn't have enough meat for the whole week. So one day they ate without meat. We ate, not they ate.**

Did you take vacations?

**I don't know. Some people do it, but not a vacation to go someplace. They went to relatives to another town and they stayed with them. For a few days they went by bus. From our town we didn't have even a train. We went by bus to the next small town and then from there we took a train or we took the bus to wherever we need to go.**

What were your family's political affiliations?

**I don't know if they were, had any politics on their minds. They were just Zionists. Everybody was praying for Zionism, and religion. We didn't have a Democratic Party and a Conservati-... We didn't have that. Maybe they had it but I was not involved in it. But I know this - everybody was a Zionist. I belonged to a youth organization, where it was little kids, like, and we use to go, whenever we had time. We use to run to the organization, like here the youth from Hadassah, let's say, and ... We went there, I remember, we used to, and we got a little older, we use to read the paper home and then we went and had a whole discussion with the kids, with the girls and the boys. It's like, it's like everywhere else, it was no different. It was just here the kids have more and there we didn't have as much, but we read a lot and we knew this was our politics. We talked about how the Kremlin used to live and all those things. So we had a view of this, I remember once, it was before May 1<sup>st</sup>, May 1<sup>st</sup> the communists celebrated – May 1st date. And we used to say, "Ahh!" They probably do things, we thought they living in heaven, because everybody supposed to be even, equal. Nobody has to be rich, and nobody has to be poor. But this was just a dream that people had. In most Jews, war left this, you know what I'm ...**

Yeah, sure.

Because we had all those pogroms and they chased us from one place to the other. So, the Jews probably thought because it's going to be Communism, it's going to be good for them and we going to be in peace. But it didn't work that way. Did not work that way.

What kind of schools did you go to?

We went to schools for Polish and Jewish together. In our town, we had a *cheder*. We went to *cheder* where we learned to read Hebrew and to write Heb-, and to write Yiddish. And then we went to school together with the Catholics. We went to school. We kept - the school was not too far away from the church was. It was a nice school. We had good teachers and we ... Saturday we didn't go to school. The Jewish kids didn't go to school. The Catholic kids went to school. And I remember after school was out, we used to go across to the school to ask him for homework to do for Monday. We had to do the homework even if we were not at school. And there was a religious hour so the priests used to come and have their religious hours and the Jewish kids use to walk out and we stayed outside for an hour 'til they were through. You know, we were connected. We could stay and hear what they say, but we didn't.

Were you friends with any of the Catholic kids?

Yeah, in fact I was a friend with a girl ... our house and their house was next to each other and she was in my house more that she was in her house. But when the war came out, I never forget that, the war came out September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1939, and she was with ... between our house and their house was like a wall – like not high. The wall was like hedge walls. We could talk to each other. And she, right away she called me out, she called me through the wall and she said to me, she called me Surela. “You, you, you” ... I'm talking Polish. “You smell with garlic.” Right away. Because Jews ate lots of garlic. So she had told me right away. She didn't wait a minute. She was sitting in my house every day. She spoke Yiddish just like me. She learned from us. But when the war came out, she was not my friend any more. You know, here we don't believe it, but it happened.

Oh boy. Do you remember what you liked best about school?

I liked the singing. I had a good voice and our teacher called me “the bird.” Had a good voice and I was in plays. I think that I wasn't terribly great. We had a play, a play of dances ... flowers. So we were all flowers and we danced around, sang, and ... we had to learn everything.

What did you do for fun when you were little?

Well we played outside. We didn't have toys like now but we had certain toys. We had dolls and we played. Whoever can afford more, had more and whoever couldn't afford, we had less. And we run around with the girls. We had forests and we went to the forest and I remember, I just had a girlfriend here from Australia from my hometown. She came to visit me. And we remind ourselves of things what we did. We used to read a lot and May was special. May was ... early morning we used to get up and run to the forest with books and read and discuss the books and have all kinds of discussions, like book reviews. We didn't call it book reviews but it was like book reviews.

You said you did belong to a Jewish youth organization?

**Yes, I belonged to like a... It's hard to explain it to you. It's like the youth, the very youth from Hadassah. This was the only youth organization near, or from B'nai B'rith. But we were younger. We were young kids. We went and run and we were dancing and discussing and having fun. You know we had more fun, I think, than the kids now. We were not on a schedule like the kids are now. We just ran around and dance and went to the forest and we had ...you know, the world is everybody's [unclear] with trees and flowers and ground and corn rows and we had all those things.**

How old were you when the war began? You were 19?

**Uh-huh.**

So, you were a teenager?

**Yeah.**

Did you have any boyfriends?

**Yes. We had boyfriends. We belonged to this organization. It was girls and boys and the dancing and [unclear] around and driving around and we did for fun, in winter. So, the boys used to rent a sled with a horse and we went on the sled and we turned over the sled ... you know, like kids. Like normal kids. But, we didn't have the luxury so we did it in our [unclear], but we did all those things.**

Did you have a job?

**A job? Yeah, I went to learn how to sew.**

Did you ever work in your father's store?

**No.**

When you went to learn how to sew, was it a special school or you were just with one woman?

**This was, the lady was doing alter-, not just alterations, they make a garment. They made garments. So, she hired few girls. She was the boss in her house and we learned how to sew and I did, did learn.**

And how did you get along with your parents?

**Fine. You know, like with parents, the same thing. But we couldn't, you know, my father said, "This is green." I couldn't say, "This is white." We had respect for our parents. More respect than now. I don't know. We didn't question it. We just knew that's that how it has to be and that's it. Parents were parents and teacher were teach - ... you know, when we saw a teacher in the street, you were my teacher so I had to curtsy to you when I saw in the street and say, "Hello."**

Were all the teachers Catholic?

**Yeah. I don't know what we had a Jewish teacher in our, our place. All were Catholics. But, they were friendly to us and we were friendly to them and we used to talk to them and sit around and...**

Now, did you graduate?

**Just grade school.**

Okay. So, how old were you when you graduated grade school?

**Fourteen.**

Fourteen, and then you went to learn how to sew?

**Yes, because the first thing in our town was a high school but it has to be paid. And it was a status quo; they just accepted two or three kids - Jewish kids. So, even if I had the money to pay, my parents had the money to pay, I couldn't get in because they accepted just two girls or two - or one girl a year. So, that's was mine college education.**

Okay. And what values or standards were most important to your parents?

**According... for kids or just general?**

No, what did your parents teach you?

**Well, I remember one thing I always repeated. My father, when we ate dinner, for example, when we had soup, my father told me that the spoon shouldn't touch the plate because you make noise, so you shouldn't do that. This I remember. You know, so many years, who remembers. But, they taught us all the thing, like to be a good housekeeper, my mother... My mother was a very good housekeeper. I remember that's all that she did, four kids. So, she had to cook and to wash and to clean and to do all those things and we saw that. You know, what you see, that's what you learn.**

Um-hmm.

**They teach, they taught us that we had to go to *cheder*. We had to learn to *daven*. And I still write English good [sic: means Yiddish]. And Polish ... we had Polish school so we learned Polish. When we belong to those organizations, some of the kids spoke a little Hebrew. We learned Hebrew. There were teachers that they learned us Hebrew songs. We sang ... we danced *horahs*. You know what a *horah* is? We danced *horahs* and we sang and we had fun.**

Which holidays were most important to your family?

**Every holiday. We used to celebrate all the holidays.**

Okay.

**My husband used to say to people in America, he said, "That's why in Poland the Jews were poor," because we had to celebrate all the Jewish holidays and all the Catholic holidays. And their holidays, we couldn't work. We couldn't do nothing because the stores**

**had to be closed. So, we worked [unclear] the stores were closed. Every holiday was a holiday. Passover was a big holiday because Passover was like spring cleaning. And they throw out the whole, the whole household was outside in order to make everything kosher.**

Were your parents more worried about being Jewish or about fitting in to the Catholic... ?

**We didn't, we didn't mix in. We didn't. The Jewish people not connect... like ghettos. We didn't live in a ghetto where I lived exactly, but we knew that Jews are Jews and Catholics are Catholics. That's all. We just, like I, with this girlfriend of mine, my neighbor, we were very close but she had her place and I had my place.**

Okay.

**It was, you know, they raised... The Catholics raised their kids that we killed Jesus. And probably our parents raised us that the Gentiles have [unclear] to us. So it was the same thing [unclear].**

Now, you said that you went to school to learn how to sew. Did you choose that occupation or did your parents choose that for you?

**Probably my parents. I was too young to choose but probably my parents because, in our town, it was... You know, Jews didn't have land in Poland. So, they ... all they were shoemakers or they were tailors or candle makers or bakers. You know, it was not a big thing. Like, maybe the big cities was more but in the small towns was no, nothing to do more. Just those things expect to do.**

Did you enjoy the sewing?

**Probably. I don't know. I probably did. If not, I wouldn't have done it.**

Were the people that you worked with Jewish or not Jewish?

**Yes, Jewish.**

And were you good at that? Was it something you enjoyed?

**Sewing?**

Uh-huh.

**Probably. I learned it. I had a girlfriend. She was crocheting and she crocheted sweaters, beautiful sweaters. In bigger cities, there were stores, they were clerks. In our city were stores too. You have to have stores. But, the family, the whole family was working to make a living. They all helped each other.**

Were you married at all before the war?

**No, I got married the day that I left Poland. I was with my husband. He was from the same town and were like engaged. And we didn't plan to get married yet. But, when the war broke out in September there then was September, October, November, December, and January came and people, the Germans started to kill people and we start to run. So,**

we decided to run away. So, my father said, "I wouldn't let you go not married." So, he went to a rabbi. He couldn't go to a rabbi there. We lived in a cul-de-sac. And in this cul-de-sac lived a rabbi. They didn't call him rabbi. He was like the second hand to rabbi but he could marry you. He could get the... So, he went to him and he had a *chuppah* and he brought the *chuppah* to our house, ten o'clock in the morning, the second of January, and we married. And right away, ten minutes later we were on our way. It was just a *chuppah*. And they had, I remember they had a sponge cake. It was just my parents, and my husband's parents, and the kids, the siblings.

And this is the man you're married to now?

**My husband died.**

Oh, I'm sorry.

**My husband died four years ago.**

Okay, I'm sorry. That's my anniversary too. January 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Oh it is! But you had a wedding. We had ... it was a wedding, that's it. We married off and ten minutes later [unclear] some people from a different town came and they said they were run away from Germans so we were younger than them and we decided to go run with them. And we did. And we didn't know where we running. So, they picked us up with a horse and buggy, I remember. And we went to the next town. Do you know the Federman's?**

I know, I know who they are.

**You know who they... He lived ten kilometers away from us. So, we run to their town and then from there, there was a train. In our town was not a train. So, we went to train and on the train, we start to run and we couldn't buy tickets because we were Jewish. So, we run, we went on the train without tickets and the Germans were already on the train watching everything. I remember, we decided that we were four or five people sitting on the seats without ticket so we had cards. So, we decided we will play cards. We are going to look down so they not going to know who we are. And if we saw they coming close so everybody ran to different bathroom to stay there until they go through the selection.**

How did you meet your husband? You lived in the same town? Did you grow...?

**We lived in the same town and we knew who we are. You know, the small town. But, we had a library, a big library. So we volunteered to change books. Every night somebody else was sitting there. We didn't hire nobody to change the books so we ... so one night he was volunteering changing the books and I came to change a book I read and he asked me if he can walk me home. So, I said, "Yes." I had other friends before but I said, "Yes," and we start to go together. I always want to run away from, from, from Poland. I don't know why. When I was a little girl, I want to run away from Poland. I don't know if it was in me because I had an old father that I was afraid I be an orphan. I just cannot understand myself. I want to go to Belgium. I want to go someplace. In fact, when ... I want to go to Bel-... I had a cousin and she went to Belgium and I wrote to her that I would like to run**

away from Poland. I didn't want to be in Poland. So, she sent me letters and then she called me that there is a guy that he can take me through the border from, like on the black market. How would you say that?

Smuggle?

Smuggle me through. So, one Saturday, I remember, we were sitting and eating dinner. Saturday my father came home from services. We had a big dinner and I told my parents that I'm going to Belgium. I said the cousin called me, she did everything. It's going to cost this much and this much. My mother start to cry. My father start to cry. Says, "Where you going to go away? You have to be with us. You the oldest daughter. We not going to let you go no place." So, you know, parents say no, it's no. So, then I... when my sister heard that I want to go away, so she says to me, "Let's do something else." So, we went to the library once, and Roosevelt was president, and we wrote to Roosevelt a letter, in Polish, that we wanted to come to America. You know, it's *beskert*. You know what *beskert* means?

Yeah.

Meant to be. Meant to be. So, we wrote him a letter. We found out when he was born and we figured out the letter should come on his birthday. We wrote the letter. We didn't tell nobody but we did it. We told him that we two girls and we told him that we have an old father and we would like to go to America. So, we wrote it and we didn't think nothing about it. We said, "We'll see. Maybe something will come." But we wrote a big letter. So, we start to get letters back from them and we didn't tell our parents again. We just kept a secret in case nothing happened, nobody should know. But then, there came one time a letter that we have to write in English and we had to have the dates of when we were born. And we had to get such a date from our parents and the whole thing like we they would send us papers. And this was not far before the war. So, we had papers and we had to write. So, then, when we supposed to write in English, there was one lawyer in Kansas City, one lawyer in our town that he knew how to read and write English. So, we went to this lawyer and we told him the whole story with my father and then spread the whole town start to write about it. The two kids want to run away from Poland. They want to go to America. And we would have gone if not for the war because we were close to it. But, it meant to be that I should be here but my sister was killed. My two brothers, my whole family was killed. I'm the only survivor from my whole family.

Now, when did you first become aware of the Nazis?

It was in 1939. Then from Czechoslovakia, people start to come in to Poland. But we thought that they don't come to Poland. Maybe they went to Czechoslovakia. Nobody ... I don't know. Maybe the older people thought but we youngsters didn't think about it. We thought, "Well, they going to Czechoslovakia." We thought that they going do what they did. Nobody ever thought about it. See, the German people, the Germans, they could afford - which could afford to run away, they did run away. But, from Poland, nobody thought about it. We didn't think it's going to happen to us. So, we all stayed. Then, when they came in already to town, then people star, like we start to go a few months later and then people start to go already. They start to go end of the year. They start to go

**beginning of the year. People start to go from town to town. We run away from town to town and the Germans run there first. They run faster than we did.**

Now, they invaded on, you said September 1<sup>st</sup>?

**Yes, September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1939. It about Rosh Hashanah time.**

Were there any restrictive laws from Poland before that or did the laws and everything start to happen after they invaded?

**When they invaded. Before? You mean, the Poles that made ...?**

Yeah.

**No, they didn't make any restrictions. Because when the Germans came in, they killed quite a few Catholics before they start with the Jews. I don't know why but we had a big drugstore. It was the only drugstore in town. But a beautiful, very elegant and they killed this owner the first day when they came in. They went in and shot him and that was it.**

Do you remember what happened on September 1<sup>st</sup>? Did anything happen in your town?

**They marched in in the morning, the German soldiers. Everybody said, "The Germans marched in." They marched in and marched through the town and they gave out, already that after six o'clock you cannot go out. And you cannot go out this time and then they start with the yellow stars and this was my, my cue to run away. When I saw my... I remember my father will come six stars, six yellow stars. They were on the bed and I said, "I'm not going to wear the star. I'm not going to wear the star." I was not a rebellious girl but I was, I had my mind made up. "I'm not going to wear the star." And my brother want to go and I don't know why he didn't go. I don't know. We just... Nobody thought of that. They just going to happen, let it happen. So, they start to give you ... you couldn't go out or somebody went out with a beard, let's say a Jew, they went and took that hair and cut it off. And they... When we were still home, they one day they gave a order that all the Jewish men should come on the market, you know, it was a marketplace, and they took them all and took them to the forest and we took them. We never see them again. And they were there a day and doing... After this day, they had an order. Those Germans, had order from the higher Germans, to let them go. So, they brought them back to town. But, this was, they were playing around with us.**

Were your brothers and sisters allowed to go to school during this time?

**No, no.**

No.

**When the war was, that was, everything was over. Everything was over, no. No business, no school, no nothing. Just had the letters we had and that's it.**

What did your parents say about the Nazis in your home?

**We all were scared. We didn't know what's going to happen. Nobody would ever think, you know? Like we have here the skinheads. Skinheads?**

Uh-huh.

**And would you think that they going to kill somebody? It's just a person. Why would they kill? Like just happened. And this happened in a big crowd, bigger amount of people. Nobody ever thought that they going to do what they did. The Germans suspected more because they did run away. When they saw what's going on... Of course, the Germans were mingled in with the Gentile. They didn't want to say that they Jewish. They were ... they thought that when they mingled with them, it's going to be okay but it wasn't okay, but it was not. So, they saw that they start to isolate them so they start to run. And they knew what they doing. They run away to England. They run away to the east coast. And we didn't do that. The Polish people didn't do it. None of ... I don't remember anybody. I think I was the first one to run away from my home town.**

Did any non-Jewish people help you?

**In town? No. No. Not us, but there were people. I had friends that they were hidden out from Polish people. They hid them out. From beginning, they paid them for it. Then, they had to keep them already because they were in danger themselves. If they would say that "I hid some Jews," they would say, "You hid them?" So you have to be killed too. So, they were afraid so they were already in the situation that they couldn't leave them there. They had to feed them and they had to make a secret out of it.**

No neighbors came to say, "We can help you" or ...?

**No, no. In fact, some of our friends from school, they killed boys that I know. My girlfriend was married, she got married in the war to a guy and this guy was a Polish guy they were very close friends. One day he came in to his house and said to him - his name was Herschel - "Herschel, let's go to the basement. I want to show you something." He went down and he shot him seven times. A good friend. So, he [unclear] and he walked out. To the wife, he didn't do nothing. To his best friend he did. Because the best friend was kind of left, he probably talked to him about coming ... some about socialism - not communism, socialism. So, his wife went down and she thought she can do something. Then he said, "Don't touch me. Just straighten out my legs." That's it and he was dead. So, they didn't help. They didn't help. In fact, they went to tell where the Jews are. The Jews made somewhere to come out behind the house and they were hidden there. So, the Poles knew. You know, they knew that there were guys that they worked with Jews and they knew where they are an they knew where they brought, supposed to bring the water from or they knew that they brought, bring the bread from. So, they watched them. They bought more ... the Poles brought ... if a Pole that had hidden some Jews, if he bought more bread than he needed, they knew that somebody's there. That they have to watch it. So, they went to the Germans and they told them where the Jews are. You understand?**

Yes, yeah. So, you got married and you left that day?

**Left the same hour, 10 minutes later.**

Ten minutes later ... And you went, and on the train?

**On the train.**

And where was the train headed?

**We didn't know. We just went. We didn't know where we're going. None of us knew where we going. We just went. And whenever the train stopped, we stopped. Then, we started on again and it took us for days and they beat us up on the way because they saw that we Jewish. And the Catholic ... not just the Germans. The Gentile Polish people beat us up. And we run 'til there was a river and the bridge was broken so we had to go around and we didn't know how to do it. You know, we're just a bunch of people, homeless people without anything. Whatever clothes we had, we had on us. Like I put on a dress and a shirt and whatever I had, that's all I had. And we went and we wind up in L'vov. In a town L'vov.**

L'vov.

**It was closed to Ukraine, but it was a Polish town. We came in, I remember, there was ... we got together on the way. We got together with a big group and we went in to this house. They said this house keeps people which they run away. So, we came in to this house. Was a ... remember this man. It was a tall man with a long, gray beard [unclear]. And he said, "Wait here on the floors. You all can lie down on the floors." There's a lot of people. And I remember, myself and my husband were close to fireplace. We had fireplaces. And, evidently, people came more and more and they pushed us up so the morning we woke up, we were full of soot. You know he, my husband looked at me, I looked at him and we were black. So, then we stayed in a day. We washed up, of course, and we stayed a day and that guy said, "You have to leave because the Germans coming in. So, I be in trouble and you'll be in trouble. You'll have to leave." So, we left and we went to close towns that the Germans didn't come. So, then we wind up in Ukraine. In Ukraine ... the Ukrainians were worse than the Germans even. They beat us the hell out of us. They beat us and they thought that we had ... they want watches. They though that we go away but we had something but we didn't have nothing. We didn't have nothing. We had nothing to eat. We didn't have nothing to give them. So, they beat us up and then they saw that we had nothing so they let us go. So, we went to the next town and in the next town and in the next town was already more free. I mean, it was not Germany. It was not Russia. It was just a little Poland left. So, we stayed there awhile and we didn't have money to live on so was ... In the town that we stayed was bread. So, we bought bread in this town and we took it another town that they had whiskey. So, we took the whiskey from there and brought it to this town for bread. And that's how we lived. And it was there that we didn't ... we were not clean. We didn't have place to take a shower. We didn't have place there to cook so we decided we had this... So I want to go back to Poland and my husband said, we were just married few hou-, few days, few weeks, few days' time, and he said to me, "If you want to go back, you go back." We didn't even sleep together. We didn't have a place where we could sleep together after we got married. He said, "Go back. I am not going." And I was really ready to go. I wore my coat already and everything and standing there waiting for the guy to take me, I said, "No, I'm not going." So, we went back and they took us to Russia because whoever registered to go to German, the German side, the Russian troops**

would send you to Siberia. So, we registered and we said, “We’ll go. We have to have a place to stay. We cannot just wander around the dirt.” So, there where we wind up.

So you went to Russia?

**To Russia. We were close to Siberia. Next state to Siberia.**

And how long were you there?

**We were there ‘til the war ended. The war ended...**

So, it wasn’t the concentration camp?

**No.**

What ... were you in a town?

**In a town where prisoners were. They put us in prison for a year and a half.**

And how did you live? How did you get food?

**We had to go to work. We had to go to work and we worked and we ate. You know, there is a word in Russia that I don’t know now, who doesn’t work doesn’t eat. That’s their, their word.**

Okay. So you were there until the war ended? Do you remember the name of the town?

**Yeah. Pirland, P-I-R-L-A-N-D.**

What happened around the end of the war? How were you liberated?

**When the war was over, they had between Russia and Poland, they had a make some kind of papers that the Polish citizens had to be freed. So, they had to free us. And then we ... they put us on a train. Took us a month to go back. So, we came back to Poland and being in Poland - March, April, May - being in Poland three months, they start to kill Jews again. It was a Kielce pogrom. I don’t know if you heard about it? And when this pogrom came out, and Jews couldn’t travel on the train to Poland after the war. Men - especially men – they took off the men, they killed them. So, if we want to make a living, we had to, the women have to travel and buy, sell, whatever it was. So, we decided that we were going to run away from Poland. If not, they going to kill us here too. So, we run away from Poland and we went to Salzburg. We didn’t go. It was not like I say. It was a big deal. So, we came to Salzburg. We were in Salzburg for six months. After the six months, they took us to Germany. They made us pay of course to go to Germany. The Germany which was in the American side.**

Oh, okay. Now when you were back in Poland, were you able to look for your family?

**Nobody was alive.**

Did you go back to your town?

**We went back 18 kilometer away and they said, “Don’t go in because you never come out.” Because some people had... There was a couple that had a mill, a flour mill, and they went back and two Poles came in and cut off their heads, both of them. They survived the war and they cut off their heads after the war.**

So the Russians were told that they had to free you, and you got on the train...

**This done during the war that they had... Because Poland was freed from the Russians so they had to let us be.**

What was your physical condition at this time, at the end of the war?

**Okay. I’m a strong person, thank God. And my husband ... you know that you have to sit in here five and six hours and I tell you the whole life but, in short, it’s okay. I was afraid because when we came to Germany, I was pregnant with my daughter. So, when we were in Austria, they had a kitchen for the people, for the runners, for the DP people. So, they had a kitchen and we ate whatever they had, just to live, just to be alive. And when I came to Germany, I got my baby girl and in Russia, I had my boy. My son was born in Russia.**

Oh.

**I didn’t tell you that.**

No. Okay. What’s his name?

**Hersch, Harry.**

Harry. And your daughter’s name?

**My daughter’s Marie Koffman. You probably know her. You know Marie Koffman. She’s younger than Harry. Marie lives here and my son lives in California. My son, the doctor. Like the Jewish mother, “My son, the doctor.”**

And so your daughter was born in Salzburg?

**No, my daughter was born in Ansbach, in Germany. I was pregnant in Salzburg, but she was born in Germany. We have international family. Everybody was born someplace else.**

Were you ever able to find out what happened to your family or you just knew they were gone?

**I know they were gone. I know about my sister that she was sick. She was pregnant. She got married during the war and she was pregnant and then she had the cholera, the sickness, and she died from that. That’s what somebody told me but nobody knows for sure. But, my brother, my older brother they told me, they told me, they don’t know but it’s what somebody told them, that he run away with three boys. Then they stopped, they take the people from our town, they came back, and they caught them in the street and turned them over to the wall and they shot them all three and that’s it. That was, that was... They just killed everybody like dogs.**

Okay.

**I'm the only survivor. Comes days, now I'm already settled, but comes days that I say, "Why did I survive?" You know, and you don't have families and very hard, very hard life.**

Did anyone from your husband's family live?

**His brother. That's why we came to Kansas City. His brother was in concentration camp. He had a tailor shop on 75<sup>th</sup> and Wornall. Maybe you know Mittelman Tailors?**

Yeah, I think I know ...

**It's still there. He died last year but the guy that bought from him goes by the name. So, he didn't know we alive and we didn't know he's alive. So, when we were in Poland, we find a guy, after the war, and he said, "I think that your brother's alive but I don't know for sure." So but he said that, "If he's alive, I'll found out for you." He was an older gentleman already. And he find out that he's alive. So, we knew he's alive but where is he, we don't know. So, when we came to Germany, my husband went, he left me and he went to look for his brother. And he went from one town to the other and, you know, there was all survivors were like gypsies. We went around, walked around the streets in the night, in the morning. So it was the middle of the night, and he, so, back from our home town and he said, "You know, Meier knows where your brother is." So, they took him over to Meier and they went and he says, "I know he was in Germany but where he is, I don't know. Somebody else knows." So, he went to somebody else. And finally they find out he is in Stuttgart. So, he went to Stuttgart and he came in to a German couple that he lived with. They say, "He just went America." So, he went to America so go look in America where to find the guy. So, this guy said that he promised them that when he settles in America some place he'd send them a letter. So, he did and they sent us a letter. We start to write to them, to him. That's how we find each other, and that's how we came to Kansas City. Otherwise, most of the people went to New York, you know, wherever. But, since we had him here we came and they were very, very close, the two brothers, very close. And he married a Kansas City girl.**

Before you found out that he was alive, did you want to go the United States?

**No, we want to go to Israel.**

You wanted to go to Israel.

**We wanted to go to Israel.**

But because he came here you...

**Because he said that we have nobody, just each other. "So, I would love for you to come here," and that's what we did. It took us a long time because they knew that we registered to Israel so we had problem to have we had papers to come to here.**

Okay. Was it hard to get the papers to come to the United States?

**For some people it wasn't hard but for us, because we had registered to go Israel, so we had a little problem. My husband was a *Revizionist*. You know what that is?**

Oh! No.

**It was right wing.**

Okay.

**And they didn't know, you know, the people, the American people which were sitting in Germany, they didn't know. So, they told me he is a left wing. So, that was... so 'til my husband persuaded them that's right wing so it happened he went to the highest general and he happened to be Jewish. So, he explained them what it is. So, then when he got the papers to come.**

Okay. Now, before you found him, you were in Germany?

**Yeah.**

Yeah. Where were you living there? Was it...

**In a DP camp.**

...in a DP camp?

**DP camp.**

And it was run by the Americans?

**It was run by the Americans and Americans sent food there [unclear] and we lived, when we came to Germany, we lived six couples in one room. And the doors were everybody had a blanket in front of the bed. We had a living room, a dining room, I would say it is, and everybody lived in another, in another corner. And that's how... and two women were pregnant, me and another lady. Somehow we didn't mind. We lived that way and that's it. Then, when I had the baby, so my husband was working in the [unclear]. He was in the... He was always a leader, my husband, he should rest in peace. So, he got a room. A little room probably like mine, I don't know, like my... a little bigger than my bedroom. A bed went in and a table, that's it. That's how we lived. But we had a private room, already, since we had a place for the baby. And my son, when my daughter was born, my son was six years old. So, he was circumcised. When she was born, we circumcised him, six year old boy.**

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

How did you spend your time?

**Germany?**

Yeah.

**You mean in the DP Camp?**

In the DP camp?

**I don't know. We did just a normal life. In this one little room but we had a kitchen in the basement so everybody cooked. You know, you cook now, I cook and hour later but we had this one stove for everybody. We went to town. We lived out of town. You know, we lived out of town out on the hill, and we went downtown and if we need to buy something, if we had money to buy so we went to buy. I don't know. We had holidays. Like [unclear] *Simkhes Torah*. It was just Jews in the DP so we, they danced around the Poland men, and they had *Simkhes Torah*, and they drank and they cooked and they baked and they lived a life. It was just at DP camp. It was not a free life. We had to live in the lemons.**

How long were you there?

**We were there from 1946 to '50 - four years.**

Now, at any time, did they try and say you have to go somewhere else?

**One time. We moved from one camp to another. They liquidate this camp so we went to Nuremburg and we stayed there for a while 'til they liquidate... You know, when people start to move to go, or they went to Israel, or they went to America, or they went to Australia. So, they start to liquidate the DP camps. So, they got smaller so they took us to a smaller camp. But, it was all DP camps.**

The whole time you were there, were you looking for ... deciding where else to go?

**That's all we want to go is to Israel because, you know, the Jews in Amer-, in Amer-, in Poland, this was the dream to go to Israel. You know, when you *daven* you say "*Be'shana Ha'ba'a Bi'Yerushalayim*," so this was a big dream. And lots of kids, they went on a *Ha'chshara*, you remember *Ha'chshara* is? They went to learn how to live on a *kibbutz*. They called it *Ha'chshara*. So they learned how to work on land because they didn't work on land in Poland. But, this was, you know, who would ever thought that we going to be, we going to have a free country. In the war, we [unclear] the country. We paid a high price. But if not for the war, this country of Israel would never be born.**

Did they have school there for your son?

**No, they had a little *cheder* so that he came here being nine years old, he didn't heard a, he didn't know a word English. We came to Kansas City...so he was nine. He doesn't know English. And he doesn't know how to say "yes" or "no" or nothing. So, but, we had to go to school. You know, kids learn fast, as you know. Kids learn fast. Even if he was nine, but he learned fast. We bought a television. We went to... I forgot what his name was they had televisions. I think Mike Lindy. We bought a television from him to pay out because we didn't have money and that's how the kids learned to, to speak. They caught the language faster. And he went to school. They put him in second grade because of his age, but he was a very good student, very serious-minded child. And he went in one year to the second and third grade.**

Oh my gosh.

**We lived on Benton, on 25<sup>th</sup> and Benton, and there was already black. There was already mixed black with white in those years, in '50's. So when he went home with the kids, they**

beat him up and they called him whitefish, you know, because nice, white people didn't live those years there. They already moved to...I don't know where they moved then, but we lived there. So we had to move from 25<sup>th</sup> and Benton. We moved to 36<sup>th</sup> and Flora. So there was already different school. There was a white school and he went to school and my daughter went to school. And, uh, did you know the Metz from Beth Shalom? You belong to Beth Shalom?

Yes. Um-hmm.

So, the kids become, became friends. The Metz's came earlier and they became friends. Then we moved to 48<sup>th</sup> and Charlotte and we lived there awhile and my son went to Paseo High School and my daughter went to school. Anyway, Hattie went to Paseo High School and there were not too many Jewish kids already because Paseo High School was already more Gentile, but the nicer class people. And we joined Beth Shalom because he need to go to Hebrew school. So we joined Beth Shalom. We didn't pay for it but we joined it. We told them that when we make money we pay them, and I do.

Um-hmm. What did you think of the United States when you first got here?

It was the funniest thing to me was, you know, I saw these people had more than we had and the cars and everything else but, to me was, the neighbors ... I was used to neighbors are neighbors. Neighbors are friends. You talk to neighbors. You go to neighbors. You need a cup sugar, you go to neighbor and here neighbors don't want to know you. This was to me so, I don't know, so vile that people don't want to be friendly. Otherwise, you know, shouldn't think its different customs, different everything than we came with. We walked to the synagogue. We didn't drive. Then I saw people do it and people eat *treyf* and all those things. It was lots of strange things. But, you know, you get used to, the good things you get used to it.

Um-hmm.

So, my son, he decided he doesn't want to go to the seventh grade either. He wants to go to high school. So, I went to the teacher, with my broken language, and I told her. She says, "Mrs. Mittelman, children born here are the same age and they go to the seventh grade. Why doesn't he want to go?" I said, "I don't know why he doesn't want to go. He doesn't want to go to the seventh grade." There was a law then that you can go to the library downtown in the summer time and go make a test. And if you go through the test and you make it, you can go to your high school. So, he did. He went to high school. We went through everything. And then we went to Washington University in St. Louis and he's my son, the doctor.

Who supported you when you first came? Uh, his brother ...?

We went ... no, the brother was poor like...

Oh, okay.

He was as poor as we were. He lived in one room and the bed came out from the wall. What you call a room like that? I still don't know.

Yeah. Like a Murphy bed?

I here so long and I still don't know but you know what I mean. So, we stayed with him a week and my brother-in-law went to his mother-in-law to live for the week. And then we went to the Joint and they gave us a room on 7<sup>th</sup> street, 7 and ... what was the street already? I've been here so long now, I live so good, so I've forgotten the poverty days. Lydia, 7<sup>th</sup> and Lydia. So we lived there in a basement and they supported us for two months. And then we went to work. I went to work for factory. I went to [unclear] Garment Company. I went before I went someplace else. I couldn't speak. There were people speaking and I couldn't speak so I was sewing on a machine. I stayed there awhile and I saw that I cannot make enough money to live on and I asked the other ladies in my broken English, how much they make and they told me and I figured out, even I was short in this country, that I had to make more money than that. So, I went to another place and I worked there and I made a little more and my husband went ... I don't know if you knew this, Alexander's Furniture? They were on the Plaza – custom-made furniture. So, there was somebody in my brother-in-law's family that he was working there. So, he took him there and he learned to make furniture.

Well, how did you learn English?

**Just by talking.**

No school or anything.

We went to night school, not too long because we didn't have a car so we couldn't drive to night school. Tulchinsky was the teacher. You know who Tulchinsky is?

Morris?

Morris Tulchinsky. He was the teacher. He said, "This is a *tisch*, a table," and he taught us.

Yeah.

**And, we learned. We still... nobody speaks perfect but we can converse.**

Okay. How did you adjust to the new country? Was it easy or...?

It was hard but you do what you have to do. That's all you can do. It was hard but I was working for this garment company. There was more Gentiles and there was two Jewish women who were working. It came ... I remember the first year came Rosh Hashanah and I didn't want to work. I thought that if I work *yom tov* God is going to punish me. There was another lady, Jewish lady, and she was working. And I came back and she says, "How can you take off two days?" I said, "I don't know how but I'm taking off. I'm not going to work *yom tov*." I never did. And the funny thing was ... this was funny ... I came back and on Friday he paid me for the whole week. It was nice of him that he paid me for the two days that I took off, not asking him. So, I said to this lady, "You see, you work and you have the two day's pay. I didn't work." So, but he was very nice to me. He understood

that I don't want to work *yom tov*, so he's not going to make me. And then we were here a while and we went in business.

The tailor shop?

No. Tailor shop was my brother-in-law's.

Okay.

We manufactured furniture. We still have Mittelman's Furniture. Now it's my daughter's. I gave it to her when my husband died. But we were, after 1959, since my husband knew already how to make furniture, we lived on 48<sup>th</sup> and Charlotte and we have a basement garage. So, we could, we manufactured there, manufacture just made two pieces. My husband went to the stores and tried to sell it. He was a wholesaler. So, he sold to the stores and little by little, we went bigger and now we are okay.

Okay. What was the hardest thing about being in the United States?

For me, it was that I didn't have any, any family. I had my husband's family but I didn't have my family. And it was hard. My sister-in-law comes from seven sisters and a brother so she had her own group. She didn't need me. And we just made friends like, we lived in this basement on Lydia, so we made friends. Everybody start to be the family. We lived there seven, eight families and we all consider ourselves family. And we still friends 'til now. And then we moved to Benton. There was 11 survivor's families and we whenever we made a [unclear] or something, we all get together. We all feel that we belong to each other since we have no family.

The Federman's, you knew before, they ended up here too?

No, I met them here.

Oh, okay.

I knew. When we met here, he told me where he lived. So, we know this we are 15 kilometer away from each other. You know Fani, um Fani, Fani, Fani ... Schiffman... you know Fani Schiffman?

Um-hmm.

Fani Schiffman's parents came from the same town that Federman comes.

Okay.

So they settled...

The Weindlings?

The Weindlings. You know the Weindlings?

We used to live behind them.

**Where? On ...?**

You know Ward Parkway?

**Parkway.**

You know Ward Parkway?

**So you know the kids? You know Billy too?**

I haven't seen him for years but I knew him growing up. Now did you face any discrimination when you were here?

**No. It was hard for us to get used to, you know. And I know now because if somebody talks with an accent - oh, not with an accent, we didn't talk at all. We just... People looked down on us and that's how it is. But, this doesn't mean they were mean. They couldn't talk to us so... [unclear] Now I don't know. He's very sick [unclear]. He's very sick. He is in a wheelchair. Billy is in a wheelchair, and the mother is very sick. She had heart trouble.**

Did you talk about what had happened to you with other people, with your children?

**We talked to people. I was not too talkative about it. I was not too talkative about it. Some people talked more. I was not. And my daughter-, my daughter-in-law used to ask me lots of questions and I told her. My daughter didn't want to talk to me about it and I asked her once why. She says she doesn't want me to get upset because when I talk about it I get upset and she didn't want me to get upset. So she doesn't know much. I tell her now more than from beginning. Beginning I told her very little.**

Are your closest friends other survivors?

**They are friends? Yeah. We still keep together.**

Um-hmm.

**We still keep close. And I have American friends but ... I don't know. We just, like we grew up together, all of us. We came over, some of them came in '49 and '50. Now it's most of our lives we live here. I have friends in, Canadians or they live in New York, and we feel close to each other. Some, you know, the conversation what we had binds us. When we get together, let's say to [unclear], whatever it is, we wind up talking about what happened to us. You know, you always... However you want to forget it, it's always behind you. It's always staying here. It's always popping up in your head, someplace. You talk or not.**

When did you become an American citizen?

**In 1955.**

So, it was soon after you were here?

**Yes. '55 we had a green card from beginning and then we became citizens. And the children became citizens at the [unclear] when we became citizens, they became citizens. They didn't have to go through that part.**

Okay. Was that important to you to become a citizen?

**Very important. Very important.**

Okay, why?

**Why? Because we loved the country and, you know, we made a life for us here. Where we going? We didn't have no place to go. To Israel we not going to go now. And to Poland, I don't want... People go see there. I don't want to even go. I don't ... If they would pay me, I wouldn't go to see Poland. My son went with the Federation three years ago, with a group. So, he went to Krakow. So, I told him from Krakow you can go to see your home town, my home town and you'll know the roots where I come from. So, he did go with his wife. They took a cab. Took him an hour from Krakow to go to my home town. That's how close it was. And then he went to the cemetery. He told me he took pictures and he went to this girlfriend of mine that I told you, that I was friends with her? She died but he went to the house and the house is all run down. It was the most gorgeous home, not just for Poland. It was a gorgeous home for America. They have a big home. It was run down. When the Russians were there they didn't have nothing. And, you know, when a country goes from hand to hand, anything that goes from hand to hand, is not good.**

What kinds of hobbies have you come to enjoy since you've been here?

**We um... I like to go to lectures. I like to go to lectures. In fact, I go now to Rabbi Cohn every Tuesday. They have, they learn the Talmud and... So, I like to learn. I always like to learn something. I used to go to the Center. I belong to Hadassah. I belong to Hadassah since I could afford five dollars dues. I belong and I was active always. I like B'nai B'rith. I belong to the Center. I remember the first what we start to belong when we came, we belonged to the Workman's Circle. You know who they are?**

No.

**There was a group that they came in 1917. And they were Jews from Russia and from Poland maybe too, and they were more socialist. Because they came... they run away from the Czar. Communism started in 1917 so they came in the 19s, the beginning of the 19s. So, we went to them. First thing, I had a friend there. She died already. And we said to each other, "We have to go that people should know who we are." So, I remember we both went to learn us and bought ourselves dresses. We bought the same dresses. I still remember the dress. It was a navy blue dress with short sleeves trimmed with pink ... both of us. And we said, "Now we didn't wear at the same time. Now we have to go show off and to see that people, that we people, just like people live here. Because what I need a dress if I don't go no place? So, we start to go and we start to get active. And then we went to Hadassah. It was closer to my heart ... because we belong, like I told you, when I was a little girl, I belonged to a Zionist Organization in Pilica. I can talk for ten days but you don't want to hear so much.**

What things that have happened recently since the war have been of most importance to you? Like the cold war, the civil rights movement, Vietnam...?

**Vietnam was important. It was a war and lots of people were killed unnecessary maybe.**

Okay. In light of your past experience, what did it mean to you to have children?

**To have my children? Well, we had to build. You know, they killed six million Jews so we had to replace them. If did not, we wouldn't have children now, the Jewish people would be wiped out. Hopefully, they never going to be wiped out because we went through a lot in the lifetimes. You know, we had 5,000...5,000 some years so we went through a lot, chasing us from countries and from places and from doing and we survived. So, hopefully, we survive. Now, it's a time when inter-marriages are bad. That scares me. But, one day I think, that's one day it's going mix up so much that we will not know who we are. And that our young people they go back to village which is very important. Lots of young people go on the Chabad and not just here, all over the country. I was now in New York for *bar mitzvah* and the kids go to the *yeshiva* which didn't happen ... You know, before the war, Jews here in America, you don't know because you have been told, but people, even my age people don't know this because they lived it. They want to embarrassed to say the Jewish. They didn't want to say that the holiday is *Pesach* and they don't eat bread. They were ashamed to say it because they want mingle around and didn't work. It does not work. The war showed that. It doesn't work. The war in Poland, with Germany. They showed that that they went back to the fifth generation. Even you converted to Catholicism, but they find you. So, we see now that, thanks to the war - we don't thank them for it but's just a matter of speech. Thanks to the war, we built a country for ourselves. And we can go with a head high and they talk about Israel and they talk about the Israeli people and they talk about the Israeli soldiers, how strong they are and what they can do, what they can't do. And this gives us, give me pride. I don't know about other people but I'm very proud of it. That we do have a country. Because they used to say that a Jew cannot take a revolver. A Jew cannot take a ... he shot nobody. But we need to do it. We do it and we do it with more mind than other countries do. And other countries come to learn to the little Jews, how to do it.**

Um-hmm. Okay. How do the memories of the Holocaust affect you today?

**Very bad. It's the same thing. Older I get, more I think about it. I think about it, how my siblings and how my parents and how my whole family got killed. And not just mine. The whole Jewish pop-... three million ... six million Jews is a lot of Jews. It's a lot of Jews. We are now just thirteen and a half million Jews all over the world and we are in every corner in the world. Wherever you go, you'll find a Jew. I don't know if you travel? You're too young yet but I have traveled a lot and I know that there is not a corner in the world that is not a Jew. And we just thirteen and a half million which is very small, very small amount of people.**

Um-hmm. Did you ever stop believing in God?

**No. See there were survivors... There were two kinds of survivors: some of them don't believe because what happened, and I don't blame them. And some of them say, "Thank**

**God that we are here.” And I’m probably among those. I’m more religious. I go to services every week. I am a believer. I think that you have to believe in something, to hold on to something. If not, you have nothing to hold on to.**

And you belong to Beth Shalom?

**I belong to Beth Shalom since we came.**

Yeah. Okay.

**I love my rabbi. He’s just a... Where do you belong?**

Beth Shalom.

**He is just, Rabbi Cohn is just an angel. And you know, since you go ... do you go to services often?**

We do. We go just about every week. We haven’t the last couple weeks.

**Oh, you do? I never saw you. Did you ever see me?**

I don’t know.

**I go to *Shabbos*. I’m there every *Shabbos*. In fact, few weeks ago, there was a dinner. Maybe you were at the dinner?**

No.

**No? A Friday night dinner and I do many times but never at my husband. So, I gave ... it was Friday night, the early service in the chapel and we had the music, and I play a little music and the dessert in memory of my husband. It was a beautiful evening, beautiful Friday night service. So, even with the music, I go back to our forefathers. They had music. They were dancing. So, the rabbis that made that that it’s not religious to them, so it’s different. They going to have it the 19<sup>th</sup> of November, they going to have another Friday night thing. Not a dinner, they just going to have service [unclear]. So come!**

Okay.

**It’s fun. The Lerner’s plays. Lerner.**

Uh-huh. Devra Lerner?

**Devra. Plays her instrument. And there is a guy that he plays beautiful. I’ve forgotten his name but he played for my dinner. Very nice.**

Okay. Why do you think that you were able to adjust to a normal life after the war? What did you have in you that enabled you to do that?

**You mean when I come to America?**

Yeah.

**You have to go on living. When we came ... when I came to Poland and when I went in to store and asked if I should go in to my home town and she said, “Don’t go,” and if I survived because I thought if somebody’s going to be there. And she told me, “Don’t go because you never go out with your head so you don’t go out.” So, if I survived that, you have to go on and I had already my children and we had to build a new life. There is no other way.**

What does being an American mean to you?

**First, it’s a free country. That’s very important. I think we have too much freedom. Not just now but we had too much freedom. People can do ... you know, I always say that they talk about the President. They laugh at the President. This does not happen in other countries. In Russia, if somebody would make fun of the president, they would kill him in the second when he said it. So, we here lots of freedom and everybody has opportunities. You know, we came here with \$18.00 and two children, and two of us. And thank God we make enough, we make a good living. We educated our children. My daughter graduated college. My son graduated more than college. My grandchildren are all graduates and I had, we start out a business in 1959 and I cannot tell you how we did. Somebody signed for us \$3,000.00. And we paid it back, of course. But we made a good living. We lived in a nice house. We always talked about it, when we get together, the survivors, we talk about it. We never could dream to have a life like this. We bought a car 1959. We bought a green Chevy and we paid \$2,000.00 for it. When I drove out and I said to myself, “If my mother would be alive to see that her daughter’s driving a car.” Because in our town was two cars. One car, I told you, this drugstore ... they had a daughter. And she drove around the car all of our kids. All of us kids run out, Marusha’s coming with the car. So it was such a novelty. And there was another car. And I said, “If I am a poor girl and I’m driving a new car...” And I was so excited with it and I was crying that my parents didn’t see that. We did everything. Bert and I had good kids and good grandchildren and I’m a great-grandmother so what else can I ask? I’m just missing my husband. I had a very good husband. Here is a picture of my husband. He’s always with me.**

Okay.

**Was a very nice guy. Everybody, whoever he touched, liked him. Not just the family, just whoever he touched. Was a very happy person, very satisfied person, very concern-... Whatever he had, his was the best. He didn’t care what you had or somebody had. Whatever he had, he valued. He was president for 12 years. We had a New American Club here. He was the president from them. Then, we have this, we have this for the six million Jews we have in the Center ... did you ever see them? Him and two other friends started out this, collected the money and we were the second in this country. Philadelphia was first and then we were, Kansas City, to do that.**

Well, that’s the end of my questions.

Okay.

Thank you very much.

**You’re welcome. There’s much, much more but that’s enough.**