

Tola Cukier Interview

October 13, 1999

Today is Wednesday, October 13th. It is 11:30 in the morning and I am at the home of Tola and Iser Cukier and we're getting ready to interview Tola. Tola, let's start out with what was your name at birth?

My name? It was Tola. It was Tola in Europe, too. Unless that it's Hebrew. I know that it was like Yona, Tobele, which means a dove.

And how do you spell that?

I never really noticed it.

Iser Cukier: T-o-b-l-e

No...

Okay. Where were you born?

In Sosnowiec. S-o-s-n-o-w-i-e-c.

That was in Poland?

Yeah.

Do you have any idea what the ... approximately what the population was of the city?

Well, it was a large city and as I understand, there were over 20,000 Jews, which means almost as many as when I came here, and I was told that Kansas City has 20,000 Jews. I'm not sure you can quote me.

So there were 20,000 Jews, about what percentage of the population would you say the Jews were?

It was a large city.

So it was like a 100 ...

A lot of gentiles.

Uh-huh. Okay.

And most of them just Poles because it's not like America where everybody came to hang their hats. You know, it was just country.

Were you born at home?

Yeah. I guess.

Were you born in the house or you're not sure?

I don't know. I know my youngest sister, I remember when she was born. And she I think was born at the home.

At the home. And what were your parents' names?

My father's was Israel. My mother's was Sarah. You want to know my sisters?

Uh-huh.

My brother was the oldest and he was born Shlomo Benyamin from both grandparents. And my sister, she was born ... I assume her name must have been Mariam Bayla because we called her just Manya. And the youngest one, her name was Rifka Nechama. But we called her Regina. And I guess there were four children, my mother, my father. But we were really six because my mother was orphaned very young and when she married ... no they married young. I don't know really how old my mother was when she married. But she had two younger sisters and I have no idea how young they were. And she ... since they lost both parents, they came to live in our home. So we were a family of eight.

Oh, my!

It was wonderful.

And do you have any idea how your parents met?

No. I really don't.

So it may have been an arranged marriage ... probably not?

I don't know. I tell you, it could have been. Either they kind of met each some place, like in the synagogue or they were pointed out to someone. I have no idea because I guess it was a different world and people met in different ways. I just know they must have been married when I was born.

And when were you born?

In Sosnowiec.

When?

In the November the 21st, 1924.

Okay.

And that's what I've been told.

Did you have grandparents?

My grandfather, who was a *shochet* [ritual slaughterer] which mean, meant to be a *yikhes* [pedigree]. You know, a man that was ... he was telling the butchers what they can have, what they can eat. *Kashrut* [kosher]. And he was the one that did this. I really don't know exactly what it meant. But it was something that you really had to be learn it, you had to know and he was highly educated in Hebrew. You know they all came from the *Yeshivas*. I come from a very, very religious family.

And this grandfather was on your mother's side or your father's side?

On my father's side. I don't really know much about my mother's family because they passed away so young before I was born. And my grandfather, from my father's side, he passed away very young. He was just ... I understand barely 40, over 40. My father's father. He had cancer and they took him to Berlin to Germany to a special hospital. That's where he passed ... that's where he died. This is where he was also buried. So we ... we, there was no grave where would go like once a year. And my grandmother was the only one that I knew. My father's mother.

Were you close to your grandmother?

Pardon me?

Were you close to your grandmother?

She used to come all the time. I remember her. I must have been quite young, but I do remember her. She was heavy set, very nice. We adored her. And we use to go to visit

her, you know. And she had a garden, and there were some vegetables that I ... I remember we used to dig and we had so much fun. It was just wonderful.

And did she live close by?

Yes. She lived in a city ... a small city really that ... where my father was born. It was called Czeladź.

How do you spell that?

C-z-e-l-a-d-ź with a little apostrophe someplace on top over the Z, I think.

Uh huh. And so how long did it take to get to your grandma's house? Do you remember? Was it ...

Well, we had to take ... on holidays, we would walk. It was like ... I don't remember how many kilometers.

That would be a pretty good walk.

But it was a nice, beautiful walk. Oh, yes. We would walk like a half a day. It was wonderful. It was more of a ... pleasure than just to hop the tram a way and go there. Much, much ...

Yes.

... more of pleasure. It was something that you really looked forward to.

And what was your neighborhood like?

My neighborhood was just like any city's neighborhood. It was a large city with ... the streets were wide. The boulevards were exceptionally wide. Now, I don't see in Kansas City ... I mean, here in Kansas City, a boulevard like this. They were like in ... in New York, you do, you know, sometimes. But it was beautiful. It was a beautiful, beautiful city.

And you lived in the city?

I lived in the city.

It ... was it an apartment?

Yes.

It was an apartment?

We all lived in apartments.

Nobody had houses ...

No.

... in the city?

No. Not the wealthy and not the poor.

Okay.

We were all living in apartments.

Were you considered middle-class?

Well, I had everything I needed and so did my sisters. My ... we were not wealthy people. And ... we were happy people. Very happy.

Describe your ... your living surroundings. How many rooms were in the house? Did you share bedrooms?

Well, we ... There were two large room and one large kitchen. And that was very, very nice apartment, because we lived in an apartment. It was a big house with probably ... below there were like ... it was a little grocery store and behind there was a large apartment ... the people that owned this. Then the other side, you would walk in and it was a different ... it was completely different than here in America. You would walk into a closed ... well, it's not a door really. It's like a whole wall that opens and everybody had their keys. And on the one side there was an apartment, a large apartment. In the front, they had a grocery store. Then on the other side, there were two tenants ... or one tenant and the one that took care of the building. She was like the concierge in French. I don't know how it was in Poland. And then upstairs there was, there was a first floor. We considered this not a first floor. The first floor was the one that you mounted the steps, where you have another set of apartments. And we said that was the first floor and then there was a second floor. Now we lived on that first floor. So, on the one, there were ... there were four tenants that had just one room. They were one room. And the end ... there were three tenants that had like one room. The last one had two rooms and a large kitchen and the one that when you walked up the steps, we had two rooms and one kitchen.

What about bedrooms?

Pardon me?

What about bedrooms?

One bedroom.

One bedroom?

Yes. The kitchen was so large. There was a bed in the bedroom.

So did your parents ...

And the dining room ... pardon me?

Did your parents have the bedroom? They slept in the bedroom?

We were children. My mother and my father they ... you know they had separate bed.

Yeah.

It's hard for you to understand that our one room was probably larger than my living room and the dining room put together. In Europe, people ... I mean, I don't know ... there are a lot of people that had smaller rooms probably in smaller homes. But, most of the people that had like a two ... a two-room apartment, which means two rooms ... really, three rooms. The rooms were very, very large. In our kitchen, there was a stove. There was a bench for ... not a bench. Really like a ... I don't know how to put it. Where you keep your dishes and everything. Just in my kitchen, you have just drawers open. There it was not built in. You had furniture. There was another one that was for the laundry. If you take something off that was to clean, you would put it in there. Just to tell you how large it was. On the other corner, there was still a large bed in the kitchen. And then on the other corner, we had ... on one corner was the, you know, the ... it was a stove. It really was an oven. I don't know ... where everybody cooked. My mother cooked. So it was large. And also in one corner we had what you call ... from both sides ... benches. When we would come home from school, that's where we sit and make our ... do our homework. That's where our friends would come and would be. You know we were just horsing around. And we had once in two weeks a woman that would come wash the laundry. But otherwise, you know, my two aunts were at home. And my mother was exceptionally clean. They all were because one aunt survived. She ... my mother married her. My mother and my father ... they married her off. And with a man that was from my *kibbutz*. And they went straight to Israel. And just before the war ... it may be a month before the war broke out. And she was the only one that survived. This is the aunt I used to travel to all the time to Israel.

Now, what did your father do for a living?

He was just a small businessman. I was going to tell you. We were lucky that in our apartment, we had water in the kitchen ...

Most people didn't?

... because most of the people had the water down in the courtyard. There was a large courtyard. But already in our courtyard we had toilets that had water which mean ... for everybody.

Did you have electricity?

In Sosnowiec?

Did you have electricity?

Yes.

Yes?

Oh sure. And we had water in the kitchen. Because ... it was by sheer luck, really. My uncle ... my father's sister's husband was a very wealthy man. They lived just like a block away from us. So ... and he was really very nice. And he had many ... he has, had properties. He was a little man with probably big brain, and he was so Hasidic that my mother used to tell me if I would approach my uncle with short sleeve, she always admonished me. She says, "You're not supposed ...," you know, or to shake hands or anything like this. And I was a little kid. I was maybe five, six-years-old. But this ... life was there completely different. But he was the one that tried also to make help if it was necessary. You know, like with the apartment, to have a nice apartment. And like with the water, that we were able to have the water upstairs. And for us ... I imagine for my father and for my mother, it was important. And also, this is ... my father used to also buy ... his sons also had big ... I don't know how to put it. It wasn't like a store. It was like ... the same thing ... like on the first floor there were a lot of ... they called it [unclear]. Everything that a person needed to be dressed. So my father used to go there, buy some, eh stuff, you know, and sell it. And that was ... you know ... it was good for him. And, you know, we keep forgetting that our parents ... my mother probably was 42, my father maybe 44 when they were taken. They were young people with young children. And so I look back and I just ... when I talk to you, I can see the kitchen. I can see the rooms. I can see my father, never ever took his place. The children would never sit down where my father would sit around the table. You understand the kind of respect?

Absolutely. Uh huh.

This is the way it was. We didn't feel cramped or we didn't feel that our life was complicated. We felt very happy. And we were not wealthy, you know. But there was always food on the table. We were always able to do the things like go to school and have friends in our home. And my mother, she really made ... she made sure that I take in the

morning a little roll for somebody that is hungry. This is the way it was in Europe. Always. And my father always brought for ... from the synagogue on Friday night, somebody to eat at our table. Whatever we would have, it was shared.

Was you ... was your family religious?

Very religious.

They were very religious Jews?

Very religious people. I, for years, when there was *Yom Kippur*, I would always look back and I always remember the *Yom Kippur* night. *Erev* [eve] *Yom Kippur* ... like here when we go to *Kol Nidre*. You see, they ... my mother didn't go the synagogue at night. She would go one time just in the synagogue ... *Rosh* ... *Yom Kippur* and they were separated from men completely. If I can remember, you know. But, they, they, it was so solemn. It was so ... you could feel it in every bone in your body, that holiday. When Pop would go to the synagogue there were no light, just the candlelight. And, I mean, it's a feeling that you will never have again, and you cannot even describe it. I never talk about it. But it was a ... something that I always think about. Always. And we didn't go to ... mother didn't go to the synagogue.

She only went once a year?

Pardon me?

She just went once a year, for *Yom Kippur*? Is that what you said?

She was a ... for *Yom Kippur* and *Rosh Hashanah*, I think. I don't remember if for *Rosh Hashanah* too. She would go to the synagogue, but it was completely separated, you know, ...

Yes.

... from the men. They were upstairs. The men were downstairs.

So like getting ready for *Shabbat* was probably an anticipated ...

Oh, yes.

Well, tell me about it.

About *Shabbat*?

Yeah.

It was beautiful. You know, Friday my mother would cook and bake the *challah*, the *challah*. It was just beautiful. But I really didn't take part in it because I really ... to me, it was just as natural as getting up in the morning, washing your face. I knew that when Friday would come, my mother would stay and she would bake and she would go every Friday morning shop for fresh everything. This is the way it was. That was the way of our life.

What was a typical *Shabbat* meal?

Oh, it was ... I must say that we had everything that we needed. My ... you know, there used to be since, we never baked, for example, a *chulent* [variant pronunciation of *cholent*, a traditional bean barley and beef stew], or a [unclear] on Friday in our home. But like, at the end of the street, there was a baker ... and ... who made bread to ... you know, for the whole neighborhood. And that's where you used to take it. And then you would bring it back, and it was all ready. For supper

So you had ... okay. So your family did make the *chulent*?

My mother made it, but she ... it was never baked at home. She wouldn't ... they would bring it back. They would put it and cover it so it would wait until Friday ... Saturday to be ready to ...

Was she a wonderful cook?

My mother ... I tell you ... I must tell you. My brother ... you know, I had a brother that survived and he lived here. Sol Gottlieb.

Yes.

He used to do ... there were many things that I didn't remember, but he always used to remind.

He was older than you?

Yes. So he would remind me. And he used to... I remember that I was a very bad eater. I never wanted to eat. My mother was very unhappy with me. So, my brother used to tell my husband ... used to say, if mother would say, "What would you eat today?" So I would say this and that. Now I really had a very short menu, like potatoes and red, red ... what do they call it here?

Beets?

Beet soup. But it's really *borscht*, it was. My mother used to make a white *borscht* and a red *borscht* and I loved red *borscht* and hamburgers and potatoes. But she couldn't cook

everyday the same thing. So she would, for example, she would say, all right. She would buy a piece of ... let's see, veal and she would kind of smash it down, put in a little egg, and kind of ... and I would say, this is what I like. But when the time came to eat, I didn't feel like eating. So I didn't eat. So I was always very, very skinny. And my mother was very unhappy with me. He used to say to my husband, you know, Sol used to say, "If my mother said in the morning she was going to make this and I, she said yes. And then in the evening, she didn't feel like eating." Because my husband used to complain that I don't eat. So he said, "That's nothing." You know, I was kind of a little spoiled. We had ... I had two younger sisters. And they ... I don't think that they were very particular with their food. They ate. And they were ... they were just fun to be around. Our youngest was really much, much younger than the three of ... the rest of us. And I imagine my mother probably didn't expect that she would get pregnant again. I don't know, but she did. And she was the most beautiful child you ever did see. She was just gorgeous! Beautiful! And, she was the one that I was left with because my father was already not here and neither my mother, my younger sister wasn't here and I was left with her. And it was already in the ghetto. They took our place away. It was difficult.

Yes.

And when they took me, she came. She wanted to go with me, but the SS didn't want to take her. She was too young. So that's how we parted.

Yes. I want to talk some more about your life as a young girl.

As a young girl?

Yeah. What ... Did you go to public school?

Yes, I went to public school. And then, before I was just to, you know, enter the ... the war broke out. And..

How old were you ...

15.

... when the war broke out? In school, what percentage of the school would you say were Jewish kids?

We were Jewish kids, period.

Oh. Well, wait a minute. Did you ...

That was the ...

It was a Jewish school?

They didn't teach any Jewishness.

Yeah.

Well, we did have a religious, you know ... one ... they had one hour of religion. That had to do with the Jewish religion. But I was going to another school. That was a private school and it was called *Bet Yakov* [Bays Yakov: a school for Jewish girls founded in Krakow].

So you went to a private school?

Oh, yes. Then I was ...

Okay.

I was going to a private school.

Okay.

That was called *Bet Yakov*.

Okay.

And that was Hebrew.

So you were taught Hebrew there?

Yes.

And in your home, you spoke Polish?

I spoke Polish to my mother and with my sisters. To my father, I spoke Polish and he answered me in Yiddish.

Now did you speak Yiddish too?

I, I spoke to my father even ... Polish, but he spoke to me, Yiddish.

Okay.

And I knew Yiddish. I just ... the girls, you know, my friends didn't speak Yiddish among themselves. And in the Hebrew school, you would learn the Hebrew, but you would still speak Polish.

Sure.

You know, it's hard for people to understand, but we were just like here. You come home and you speak all the time English. Our son, we wanted him to know a little Yiddish. So I said to Iser, let's speak a little Yiddish. And most of my Yiddish, I really have learned more in the camps ... the five years. And they ... because all we were doing was speaking Yiddish. There were a lot of Yiddish going on then. And before, you were in school. In school, you were only with Polish, with your neighbors, only in Polish. With your friends, out of the school, also always in Polish. And at home, it was different. But my mother spoke to me also Polish because she was all the time with her neighbors. You have to realize this was not a Jewish country. And, so, people don't understand it. But the fact is that you lived ... the books were only in Polish. And your regular school, in your kindergarten, you started out when you were a little tot, just like here... It was a nice life.

Sounds like it. Did you belong to any organizations as young girl? Did they have ...

Well, you know, we kind of tried one times to the *Hashomer Hadati* to the Jew. You tried really to go. But the fact is, your parents were not very keen for you to belong to any Zionistic organizations. You know, the very religious Jews were ... they believed in the *Meshiakh* [the Messiah]. And my father was a very religious Jew. But I imagine if he would have lived in this, you know, the time, he probably would have been exactly the same way. He would have wanted to go to Israel. He would have wanted to. But we lived in different times. We lived in different places. It was ... this is not something that I know for sure. I just can assume. So ...

You had a good life where you were.

Yes. I tell you something. A lot of people, when you say you have good life means that you were very wealthy. It just so happened that most of my friends were quite wealthy. And it's funny but they always used to come and do their homework in my home because it was a very pleasant home. You know, their parents maybe were very busy in the stores or in the businesses, and so were their mother. I had friends that had nannies from Germany brought home. But they would come. They would take care of the little children. And the girls that were like my age would go to school. They would go to do homework. Sometimes I would go to their home. But most of the time they kind of liked to be in my home. So that's what we did. We were in the kitchen, we had that bench. There were like four ... you know, we could sit like four kids and do homework.

Okay. Were most of your friends Jewish?

All of them.

All of them were Jewish?

Sure. They were all Jewish. And we were very, very close. You know, one girlfriend that lives in England. Now I haven't been for quite a few years in touch with her, but when she heard that I am alive and she happened to come to America. Was in Las Vegas of all the places she found out that I am alive, she got the telephone. But she called me and she took a special trip to Kansas City just for two hours so we could spend it at the airport and she flew back. She had to go back to England with her husband. So, you know, we are that kind ... I have very, very good, very close friends here in America that were from before the war. Some of them are not here anymore and some of them that I met in the camps. We were five years together.

Yes.

And that was something to.

Yes. All right. Okay. Let's go on here. When you were growing up, were you subjected to antisemitism?

We lived in an antisemitic country. And we knew our places. For example, there were times when we heard that ... you know, the boys, most of the time, the young children were dressed just like the parents. Dressed really in the [unclear] that looked like Jewish. The hats, the silk coats, and sometimes you would hear that they try to kind of hurt them or beat them up, or try to throw fire. We knew this but it wasn't as rampant, at least not in this city where I lived. But we lived among antisemites only. And we knew it.

Did your community have a lot of Jewish culture? A Theater? Jewish theater? Jewish newspaper?

Well, I tell you frankly. I am sure we did.

You just don't remember?

But, I just didn't ... I was too young for that, you know. Most of the time you started out when you were 18, 19 in your normal life. This is what you did. Otherwise, you had the school plays. That's what I did. I used to have pictures as a young butterfly. And, you know, my friends sometimes remember how we used to, you know, sing the songs and prepare it in school. It was a Jewish school but it was a Polish school really 'cause you could never hear there a Jewish word because the kids, among themselves, would speak Polish. And so ...

So you didn't ... you never experienced antisemitism directly, but you were always aware of it?

I tell you. Let's say in our home. When it came, let's say, *Sukkah*, and we had to ... they would eat in the *Sukkah*. We would build a *Sukkah* downstairs. And they would ... we would ... the kids would go there. We would make in the *Bet Yakov* all kind of thing. Oh,

we would come home and we would do this because there were quite a few families that were Jewish where I lived.

Yeah.

You understand?

Sure.

I ... we had ... we had maybe four Gentile tenants there in the house. And there were probably like six, at least, Jewish families. So we were really like a mixture. But the children that were Gentile would go to different schools. They would go to Catholic schools. I had one Jewish girlfriend that lived across the street that I was very close with and she was going to a Catholic school because her parents felt that she would get a better education. And her, her father was a pharmacist. And they were really what you would call ... you know, there were all kind of different Jews. There were the very Hasidic Jews that we called aristocracy. There were very, there were the very, well, assimilated Jews, that we called aristocracy. So you had two ... they were ... they really never mixed.

But the majority of Jews were religious, would you say, in your town?

Definitely. No doubt about it. But this just so happened to be, for example, that she would go to Catholic school. And ... but we were so close. Her uncle, for example, her grandmother, she looked really like a queen, you know, with her gray hair with all that. And her brother was a doctor, a young doctor. And they ... the whole family were highly educated people. And, as a matter of fact, one of her father's sister converted to Catholicism. And her son was very close to Judaism, even though he was raised a Catholic. And he was the one that saved quite a few Jews. And they took him to Auschwitz. You know, what the Germans used to do in the beginning? They would just say that he was sick and they would send a little box with ashes. And this, this ...

What box was that?

A box of ... with ashes.

With ashes?

With ashes ... of a certain person. The Germans would do this. They would send it back. This ... her cousin, my girlfriend's cousin, was a ... whose mother converted and he felt so close to Jews that he worked so hard to save the Jews, that they caught him and all that came back after him was ashes. So, you know, it's not ... this has nothing to do with whatever you asked me. But just ... since you do ask me ... yes, there were Jews who were different.

When, in your town, did you become of ... When were you aware of the Nazi presence?

As soon as they slipped over the threshold.

So what year was that?

In '39 ... September.

September '39.

Right.

Now, prior to that, had your family, you know, had any inkling that something was going to happen?

No. No. No.

No. None, none whatsoever?

No. Nobody believes in anything like this.

Yeah. So when the Nazis came to your town, what did they do?

Well, half of the Jews ... they took ... my father and Sol was ... together with the rest of the Jews was taken to a place. They were all surrounded, rounded up.

Okay. So they didn't put you in a ghetto first?

No. First of all, first of all, they took ... they surrounded the city. And wherever there, they were Jews, they said, "*Juden out! Raus!*" which means, all the Jews, out. They were going through the streets, through the avenues. Out.

Do you remember how your felt? How your family felt? Were they ...

No, they ... first of all, it was the men. Do I remember how they felt? Sure. When ... it, they ... we lived like mice. We tried to hide wherever we could. There was no place to hide. It's very difficult to describe a situation like this ... have to write a book. It's just impossible. You can't even think about it.

So the Nazis came.

Yes.

And they rounded up the men.

Yes. And half of the men were really shot.

So the first thing they did was they shot ... shoot a lot of the men and ...

And the rest they kept for work. They still let you go to home, to your home. As a matter of fact, my father ... after a month took Sol ... Sol was, I don't know, he was 18, 19.

Was he the oldest in the family?

Yes. He ... and what happened ... must have been 19. I don't know. Anyhow, to make it short, my father ... I remember like now, he took Sol very, very early in the morning, it must have been like 3 o'clock in the morning, and he took him to the station because when he came back, he told us he gave him his fur coat, you know, my father ... I remember like now, he had, you know, a fur coat that was ... most men really did because the winters were very, very ...

Severe.

And my ... and he gave him anything ... everything he could. He put him on the train and he told him where to go. You know, he went to work, which is not far from the Russian border, and he came home. And Sol always said, "My father's coat saved my life." They were going someplace ... to a river or to ice. And he picked his coat up, you know, and he went through ... over the ice. He always was telling me this, you know. And, he survived, Sol.

But ... now ... was he put in a camp?

No. Sol did go. I think he was in a camp in Russia. But then they were asking for volunteers to go to the Polish Army, and so he enlisted right there in Russia. And he went to England. Sol went to England with the Army ... [unclear] Army ... Polish Army. Then he was in Egypt. He was all over, you know.

Sol?

That's how he was saved.

How interesting. So, go on. So they ... so Sol was sent away. And then what happened to your father right away?

Well, my father was ... they were taking them to work.

For hard labor.

[Unclear] For hard labor. Oh, my gosh, you know. And dragging coal and doing this ... and my father ... my father got sick to begin with. I really can't talk about it.

Okay. And you and your sisters and your mother ...

My sister ... my younger sister, that was 13 years at the time, she was taken to the camp before I was taken.

So it was just a matter of chance?

It was just a matter of where they caught you or where they grabbed you. So she was the first... And then my mother was taken, I mean they, they just little by little. Every time there was an alarm, there was a place where you have to...

[End of Tape 1 Side 1. Beginning of Tape 1, Side 2]

While this was going on, were you still allowed to stay in your home?

Oh, they took away, they put so many people, they made the ghetto, that was not far from where we were. So it wasn't that you had a home, you had just a space in a room. And I was with my sister left. That's it. Everybody was already gone; my brother, my father, my mother and my younger sister.

Did you and your sister understand ... I mean, did you know where your family was going? Where they had been taken?

Well, I tell you something, we would really have to be dummies.

Yes.

We just didn't know. We didn't suspect that such a cruelty could be ...

Yes.

... done to the people. That they could have been ... we just couldn't understand it. We were ... like I said even the older ones couldn't believe it. So how could we believe it? We just thought maybe ... who knows? Maybe they were going to work. But in the long run ...

Yeah.

... it really didn't help.

No.

We just didn't hold much hope. But we couldn't believe either. We ... I hoped until the last minute, when I was finally liberated. I was sure that I am going to come out and I'll see my younger sister. But I ... as I was coming out, I found out in the last ... at the last stops of the camps, just before the liberation. I was liberated on May the 8th which is the last day of the war, the very last, and um, we hoped. And whomever you would see, you know, because we were still in camps ... in some of the camps.

Right.

That's where you had your stops. And you'd always see somebody that came from Auschwitz because my camp was like an *abteilung* [section] of Auschwitz, which means a part ... we belonged to under their jurisdiction, I assume. But I was in Gleiwitz most of the time.

Now, were you ... were you deported in 1939?

No. In 1939 the war broke out.

Yes.

And there were a lot shops that were open in the city, within the cities. And we were taken to the ghettos and in the morning by the SS to work. The ones that were left.

So ...

I took my little sister with me.

Yes.

My little sister of nine.

To the ghetto?

I took her with me. Yes.

To the ghetto?

I was with her all the time.

Now, in the ghetto ...

There was poverty.

Yes. And you had to share room ...

There was hunger.

Right.

There was nothing to share it. You had nothing to share it, but you did your best. Once I had an aunt in Będzin, where your father comes from, and she still had it pretty good. So I begged my little sister and she went Sosnowiec to Będzin. It must have been ... how many could have been

Iser Cukier: Six kilometers

... six kilometers and that tiny little girl that was this way, she went.

Herself?

Yes. Because I knew that she would have food there maybe because I couldn't give her food. I didn't have any.

And was it dangerous for her to go?

Well, she ... she was beautiful and she was dark blonde and she ... they couldn't ... she took off the ...

The Star?

She risked her ... I risked her life, but I told her to go. And she was there just a week. She couldn't be without me. She came home. She said, "I would rather cry. I would rather die. But I want to be with you." And that was ... we had each other. So when I was taken ...

Yeah.

And they didn't want her, the Germans, the only words I remember was she said, "Where are you leaving me?" Is was terrible.

And that was the last time you saw her?

That's right.

And do you know what happened to her? Did she ...

Yes. Somebody ... when I found myself on the last, my last trip before the liberation, I wound up in Ravensbrück, which was a terrible, terrible camp but we survived this too.

There was a girl that I met from my hometown and she told me that Mengele chose her from all the little girls. She was, she was just beautiful.

She was beautiful.

I mean, she was strikingly beautiful.

Yes.

She had her hair ... she never ... you know, we didn't cut them ... like in ringlets and she was, she was just beautiful. And he chose her and she was a page ... a page girl.

Which meant?

Page - like a page boy, you know.

To run messages?

Yeah, a messenger. Until she got sick with typhoid and that was the end. So ...

So you ... what do you ... what year were you deported? Do you remember?

Do you mean deported?

Yeah. What year?

It wasn't what you would call deported.

Okay.

They took me and the rest of my friends. I have a very dear friend that you really would enjoy altogether, the two of us, and we really stayed close until the last second. And we were taken first of all, as I mentioned before, to the working places ... the shops that they opened, the Germans. They opened garment shops for the soldiers ... I guess for the military and we were taken back home. And then ... many times I watched my little sister pass out because she was so hungry. Anyhow, by 19-, I worked there ... and my little sister was taken just about the same time, 1940, the beginning of 1943. We were taken ... rounded up by the ... when we were taken by the SS, we didn't ... they didn't take us home anymore to the ghetto. We just went to a special place where they segregated us, when I had ... when my little sister said to me, "Where are you leaving me?" I never saw her. And then they took us to trains and we just had one stop and we were gone. We were taken to a concentration camp.

Which one?

Gleiwitz.

And you were there ...

I was there until 1945, the beginning of 1945 January.

Okay.

And from there, when the Russians started coming, I assume, we were taken ... dragged to other ... you know, it was winter, January. We were barely walking, really. We were taken to the wagons, and we traveled probably around ten days there until we got to Ravensbrück to that camp, too, just like Auschwitz. And, I remember a silly thing. I went down ... we came out of the wagons ... I mean, there were more dead ones inside than the living ones, but I came out with my girlfriend and I remember there was a puddle. There must have been a snow or a rain and there was a puddle of black water. I can see myself right there and I bent down to drink the water and my girlfriend said to ... she grabbed me and she said, "You survived until now and you want ... now you want typhoid?" And she grabbed me, you know, and we always remembered it. And we marched. I don't remember how far it was from the station. We marched all across until we came to Ravensbrück in the spring.

We won't talk about your experience in the camps because that's... they don't want us to include that as part of the interview. But we're going to talk about what happened to you after liberation, etc. But before we do that, is there anything else you'd like to say about, you know, your life in Poland or life before?

My life in Poland, I hate to say because it was an antisemitic country, but you have to realize Jews isolated themselves and the Christians were isolating themselves. So we were like two, two entity ... separate entities. And we lived ... I don't know but I had a very, very nice life. I was never hungry. I had beautiful friends. I had the most wonderful family. A father whom I adored and my mother whom I adored with my sisters. That was wonderful! Okay? I was nicely dressed. My father would do everything for the children. He would probably go hungry for the children. So like I said before, we were not a wealthy family but we managed to have a very nice life. I remember my very ... my ... the girls that were really wealthy, they used to say, "You come to Mrs. Cukier ... I mean, Mrs. Gottlieb," that was my name. "and you can drink the coffee right from her floor."

Oh, my.

You know, she ... it was a very clean, beautiful house. Whatever there was ... there was no beautiful furniture. There was nothing. There was no riches so to speak of but we had a nice, loving home. You know? My father ... my brother would go to the *Yeshiva*. He didn't

... wasn't caring very much for it, but my father sent him there with whatever he had. This is the kind of a life I lived. I was loved. I did love. We were a close family.

[Tape cuts out] ... liberation?

Well, I was liberated. And I found out ... I found my father's cousin. She survived. She was hiding. Of all the places, she worked in the ... I imagine that the Germans must have taken over, but she was much older than I was and she was educated. She must have been at the time, already, like 27-, 28-years-old. So, maybe older, and she worked in the city hall. She became blonde. She was dark. And she worked there for five years. She ran away right when the Germans came. She said to ... in a large city that was between really Pol.... Sosnowiec was very close also to the border, the German border. You know, our streets sometimes would kind of ... it was called like the border street because once upon a time it must have belonged completely to the Germans. But anyhow, she worked and they didn't detect her. She spoke a beautiful Polish and she spoke a beautiful German. And that's how we met. She found out that I was alive and I found out that she was alive. That's the only one I knew.

But before we go on to that, tell me about the day you were liberated. What was that like?

It was terrible.

Terrible.

I was liberated with, with my best girlfriend, the one that I talked about.

And who liberated you? Was it the ...

We were not liberated ...

... Russians? The Americans?

Nobody. Well, at the time I didn't even realize where I was liberated. You know it was Germany. It wasn't in Poland that I was liberated ...

Okay.

... because I was in Germany.

Okay.

And we were wandering ... really from ... oh, my gosh! If I would have to tell you how I was liberated and where we stopped and where we were trying to reach and how we came

from one ... you know, the Russian were here. We tried to reach the Americans. It would just be a book probably for a hundred pages.

But there was ... there was a moment when you realized you were free, is that right?

Well, I tell you. When we were liberated we were so sick.

Did you have ... what were you sick ...

We were sick.

Just malnutrition?

Oh, we were malnutrition. We had diarrhea. We were so sick and we were sitting on a bench. It's just like somebody that all of a sudden is completely abandoned. You don't have anybody.

Yeah.

You don't talk to anybody. You don't know anybody. And the Germans ... it was a German city. I don't know exactly. I don't remember the name. And they say, "They should have killed you all," when they looked at us. And we were in those striped dresses with those wooden shoes. We looked like *Muselmanns* [camp slang for inmates who had seemingly given up the will to live], you know. We were just nothing and still there was so much hate for us. I don't know. And then what happened, somebody passed by with a wagon with hay and the people stopped and they told us to get, to get on the wagon. We were ... you know, I was with my girlfriend and then there were two other friends that stuck together. So they came to join us. So we were the four of us together. And I remember we were taken, it must have been a farm, you know, because we were way away from any city. We were a little scared but we went ... came there and they took us to the cellar. It was a home ... a farm. They took us to the cellar and they made some places for us to sleep and they brought us some warm milk.

And these were Gentile people?

I tell you. We stayed there, I think, over the night and over the day. Then they took us and they took us to the city, back to the city. I really remember very little, but I remember that I was almost sure that they ... that they must have been Jews that were hiding. That's my impression. I just had this funny feeling, and I always think about it. I never really spoke to my friends about it but sometimes I am almost sure because it was too much ...

Yeah.

They cared too much about us. And so we went from one city. We came to one city. I don't remember. They say that the Russians were coming. We were trying really to go toward where the American were. That was a very tough time. And one of our friends there got sick with typhoid because they started to eat because we came to a house ... to a German house. There was food stocked up.

Stocked up.

Because ...

Nobody was ...

... the Germans left.

Yeah. Yeah.

And they left everything behind. And I remember we used to go to the other girls ... to the hospital to see how they were doing. And then my girlfriend, the one that I am still very close with, she started the same thing. She... [coughing and clearing throat] Excuse me. She ate things what she wasn't supposed to and in the middle of the night, she got ... I didn't have a thermometer, but she was burning up. And she was ... and she didn't even know what she was doing because I took the food away from her and she was trying to hit me. And she said that I want to starve her. But I didn't want to starve her. I just was afraid of her. I said, "Look at you. You're going to get sick. You know, you probably have typhoid already." And, you know, it was a very horrible time. It just was terrible, but she came out of it. And so we started again, you know, to ... We went wherever we could to find out about our families and who survived and who didn't survive.

So you found your way back?

We found our back ... way back to wherever it was. Wherever we would come closer to the, you know, to the American.

I see.

And then, when we came ... when we tried to come closer to home, my girlfriend found in her home her uncle and he saw. So she found her family. I didn't find anybody.

But you did go back to your ...

I did find my cousin, as I told you.

Yes.

And she was going back toward the Americans and that's where I went with her. And so when I came I came to ... my God. What was the city that I lived in? You know, it's a terrible thing ... like a blank and I've lived there since at least June until I left for France.

This was in Poland?

Regensburg.

Okay.

That's where I was with my cousin.

Yes.

I came to Regensburg, And I met a family there that survived, and there was a nine-year-old girl, a red headed girl, that I've forgotten to tell you. She was left with a nanny before the war. This was a German Jewish family to ... who were resettled from Germany to Poland. And they had ... one of the brothers that survived, had this little girl. And he let ... because he left this little girl. He lost his wife. He left this little girl with the nanny and he left her as a tenant where my cousin had, the one that was working for the Germans, she had a large apartment and they put her into this ... the nanny and that child with her. So they must have known something but I've never asked. Never found out. And this child was nine-years-old. She was red headed. And this was to me just like good medicine. She was so close to me and I adored her. I have a picture. One day I have to find this and show it to you. I, myself, looked like I would be 50 because, you know, right after the war I wore a pair of house shoes that were this large and some kind of a little shirt and I ... anyhow, I was with her and it broke my heart when I had to leave and I had to leave, because she found her father and she, thank God, that she found her uncle and a cousin. They wanted me to stay there but, in the meantime, I tried to reach ... find out what happened to my family because I still wasn't sure. And I wanted to find my family that I have in America because I knew that we did. And so, it was ... it was very ... it was a very tough time for me. And then somebody ... there was a Jewish community in Regensburg and they told me that there were two rabbis that are doing ... trying to find family for the people that have been liberated. And so, I found ... one rabbi was from England, but he told ... when I came to see him he told me that I should wait for the rabbi that was older. And so ... and this was Rabbi Eugene Littman and he really did everything for me and he did everything. There were two friends that I met from my hometown and they had a family in France. There was no emigration to Israel at this point, you know. And there was no way to go anyplace. Not to America, either. But Rabbi Eugene Littman was wonderful, and he found ... he managed to send me and the two boys that I knew from hometown to France. And it was their aunt ... the, the boys' uncle and aunt came from Poland years back and settled in France. So they found a home ... a family.

So you went to France.

Because the uncle was a brother of their father and so when I came with them they adopted me like so I found a family.

And where in France?

In Paris.

Right. So you went to Paris?

Yes. And I have ... they were really very nice to me.

So you never went to a displaced persons camp?

No. No. I never did go to a displaced person. This way, maybe, I would have gone to Israel because I wanted to wait. I knew I had ... my dear aunt there. That left ... my mother married her off in 1939. I mentioned this before. Right? And she left with the last boat. As a matter of fact, the boat ... this was in Haifa. This was the last boat that ever left Europe with the refugees. And so going back, I found a home. That doesn't mean that I didn't cry myself to sleep every night, and Mrs. ... Madame Rothenberg used to say that I have [unclear] every Monday and every Thursday. You know? I was always wondering and always hoping.

So at this point, you didn't know that your brother had survived yet?

Not yet, because I hadn't been in touch. Rabbi Eugene Littman tried to get in touch with my family. Sol, I think, in the meantime, was still in Egypt. I really don't recall exactly because when I came here, I think Sol was already here.

Now what year was it that you went to Paris?

In 19- ... really, it was like January 1946.

Okay.

I was a few months in Germany.

So how old were you were ... when you went to Paris?

1945. 21?

Okay. So you're in Paris, a new family.

Yeah. They're very nice and I'm trying to kind of reach my family.

Now the family in Paris ...

That wasn't my family.

No. No. But your ...

But they were very nice to me.

And they escaped ...

Oh, they were in Draunsee. They were hidden. It's a long story.

Yeah. We won't go into that. But they ...

But they survived. They were a father, a mother and a son and a daughter. But some of his brothers lost their family. Mr. Rothenberg had two brothers. They lost their family. There wasn't ... there were no people that didn't have somebody that they lose ... lost.

And so they were very supportive to you and helped you get through.

No.

No?

I tell you. It was ... it was a very, very hard, difficult time for me.

How did you find ...

The whole liberation was just like an awakening that "this is it!" Until you were liberated there was hope. There was hope. I lived with hope. There was nothing.

Well, how were you able to adjust and to pull yourself together knowing that nobody had survived?

Well, I don't really know if I adjusted. Did I?

Well, by my definition, yes. I would say so. All right. You're in Paris. And did you go to work after a while or ...

No. They didn't want me to go to work. I was just there. I tried to help out as much as I could. She had two boys and me, you know. She had a woman that would come to clean once a week. They were well-to-do people. And Mr. Rothenberg was just the most wonderful person that I have known. He was the ... he became the president of this club that would help ... was helping people that were liberated and came to Paris. I remember

... and that's not a joke ... but I remember Mrs. Rothenberg said he came home. There was a girl that was quite obese. So he promptly took my girdle and gave it to her. You know? He was ... they really both had heart of gold. But this is the kind of people I met, so... And then also I kept in touch with Rabbi Eugene Littman. He wanted to know. He tried at the UNRRA. He was a wonderful, wonderful man and we were friends. I met his wife and his two children, and when he came he waited for us, didn't he? When we came from France with my little boy.

Now when did you meet Iser?

I met Iser... that's a long story. He brought a hello to Mrs. Rothenberg from her nephew who was in the Polish Army and that's when I met him.

So he came to the house?

Came to the house.

And you were there?

Yeah.

And you ...

Well, I was fighting it for quite a while. I didn't want to get married but I guess he talked me into it.

So you were introduced?

They married me.

That's flattering.

Iser Cukier: This was ... this was a different story.

You're not supposed to talk.

Oh, gosh! So you were in Paris how long before you met Iser?

I don't remember really. We got married in 1947.

Okay. So you dated a while? And then he ...

Yeah. Well, he would come all the time. I wasn't dating.

Oh.

I was just being there.

Yeah.

But he would come. And, you know, he was lonely. I was lonely and ...

So you got married in Paris? And ...

The marriage ... The marriage was performed at the Rothenbergs and she gave me her dress that she wore when she got married. They were very nice.

Yeah. And then, and then you had one son before you came to the States. Is that right?

We both had one son.

You both had one son. And his name?

Well, we call him Jeanot.

And he ... and spell that.

J-e-a-n-o-t.

And when was he born?

He was born in Paris on November the 1st, 1948.

Okay. So why did you decide to come to the States?

I found my brother.

He was in ...

I found my brother. I was supposed to come to the State before, I think, but when I, you know, found out that I have my brother and also Rabbi Eugene Littman found for me the family. I had my Uncle Henry and I had more family here, you know, Goldene and Esther Rydell, my cousins. And I don't know... We just decided. Frankly, I decided to come to America because we lived in France and the Korean War broke out again and I have been ... I don't believe I could take even the thought of having another war. And even though it was a far-fetched situation ... but I guess that you become a little too sensitive and you just decided that maybe it's time to go and look for new pastures.

Okay. So your brother was already in Kansas City?

Yes.

So you made a decision to come to Kansas City? [Tape cuts out.] When you came to this country, where did you live initially? When you first came to the United States?

When we came to the United States we were very lucky because my husband's brother waited for him and Rabbi Eugene Littman waited for us. My girlfriend, Etta, waited for us and it was just a warm feeling because you felt that maybe, God willing, there will be a new life for all of us.

And when did you come? What year was that?

We came here in March. March the 2nd, 1952.

And you came on a boat?

We came with a boat. We paid our passage. We came first-class.

First-class. Excuse me! Okay!

And it was beautiful. And our little Jeanot was running around the boat and he had ... I mean, everybody was crazy about him. He was three years and two months, I think ... or four months, three years and four months old, and he was a beautiful little boy. He really was. And he was a doll. He was dressed well and he was running around, speaking French and it was just great.

What were your first impressions of the United States?

If I have to be very frank ...

Yeah.

As we were coming into the harbor ...

In New York?

It was so black and so overpowering to see the tall building. It was so depressing. It really scared me. I didn't share this with my husband. And as long as my son, our son, was so excited, it was enough for me. But it was ... There were a million thoughts going through my mind and I was wondering, "What now?" I think I was talking to God a lot.

And so you stayed on the East Coast?

We stayed on the East Coast because my husband had a brother in New Jersey.

How long did you stay there?

Until the Fall.

Okay.

Because at this time, the fall time, we decided to come to Kansas City.

Because your brother was here?

My family was here. We decided to come to visit Kansas City.

So you came to visit first?

To visit.

Before you ...

Sure.

Okay. So what'd you think of ...

Sure. I didn't take ... I mean not that I had so much.

Yeah.

But, after all, my husband's brother had an apartment building and they gave us an apartment. So we lived there. We had worked to live.

Did you like Kansas City? [Sounds like tape stops and restarts.]

As a matter of fact, I really don't remember exactly who waited for me and for little Jeanot, because I came with my little boy. And ... but I remember it was just beautiful. Patterson, New Jersey was hot and New York was depressing. Here it was ... It felt like a city that was open. There were trees. There were homes that were not overpowering and my uncle was just the most marvelous person. I met my cousin, Marian - my cousins, Marian and Leon Meyer, my father's sister's son, and they were just very sweet, nice people. They had a little girl, Janet, that was adorable. I believe she was a little younger than Jeanot. She was younger than Jeanot. And I tell you the truth, I fell in love with Kansas City and I ... When my husband talked to me, when we communicated ...

He was still in the East?

... after a few days, I told my husband, "I believe that this is a city I would like to settle in." And I told him I have really moved us from Paris to New York and to New Jersey because I did everything what was necessary to do because my husband was busy making his styles in Paris. And also he was a teacher at the ... I think at the ORT. And so I did everything on my own, by myself and I told him I would appreciate the few things we do have ... we didn't have any furniture, just whatever we did have in our possession. I said, "Pack it up. Wrap it up. Send it over and come."

And that was that?

And I said, "I'm not coming back."

So did Iser put up a fight?

Oh, no.

No?

No. He just ... He could see that I was very determined that I really didn't want to live in Patterson, New Jersey. And also, I must be very frank, I was very tired of wandering around. I wanted to settle down. I wanted to raise my family - be a good wife and a good mother. I didn't have too many aspirations. I just wanted to have a little tranquillity and some family around me that reminded me of my home.

So when you settled in Kansas City, you stayed home? You didn't take a job?

Not really. I was in Kansas City. Oh, it's a wonderful story but it's not for now. I met wonderful people, and I had an apartment. We were able to move into a very nice apartment on Armour Boulevard. And they were so wonderful to, you know, to ... We got this apartment from Irving Rubin. I think they're in the real estate business, they were. And I met ... the apartment was beautiful. He was a lovely person and through him we met his wife and they... Anna Lee and they had little Linda, you know. And the children just took to each other. They had a little boy that was older than Jeanot, Skipper. And we will never forget this how wonderful they were to all of us. How much we appreciate it!

[End of Tape 1 Side 2. Being Tape 2 Side 1]

In adjusting life in Kansas City was maybe a little bit easier for you because you were surrounded by your family and you have made some lovely friends. Was learning the language a fear of your ...

Well, not truly. It was difficult. You have to start all over again. Really have to do it. After all, you had to get accustomed to everything that was America and learn if you

wanted to function. Our little boy, he wanted really desperately to speak English. It was very hard for him because he really didn't understand much. And ... but I send him to kindergarten and he's learned in a heartbeat. And we also have neighbors and I remember, I don't remember how long it took me, but I remember one day he came home from school and he said to me, "Mom," we have very nice neighbors, really. So he said, "Mom, I heard you speak English to the lady next door." And I told him, "Well, it's really not English. It's a broken English." He said, "Mom, I really don't want to speak French to you anymore. I really want to speak English." And he was very determined. I really tried to speak ... start speaking English and tried very hard to listen. And I would go to school. I would try to speak to his teachers. They were very understanding, and we also had a neighbor and she had a boy, Jeanot's age, and they're still friends. The name is Markowitz, Jo Markowitz, and we were, God they were close, the two boys. And so this is the way it started out. He had someone to speak with and it wasn't the same apartment. That made it nice.

As your son was growing up, did you every talk to him about your experience during the war?

Not really.

No. Did he ever ask questions?

Well, my husband always talked to him and I felt that this was a little too much for a little boy to grasp. I'm not a psychologist but I felt that it was just a bit overwhelming for a young mind and so I really didn't talk to my son about the past. I would mention ...

Even as he got older as a teenager?

Oh, I would talk to him in my letters to him.

I see.

I would tell him about my home. I would tell him how it was on the Sabbath, on the holidays, about the love that we had. I didn't talk about the sad parts that we had to leave all this. I wanted to instill in him the love that we ... I really had for my mother, my father, my sisters and I wanted to tell him how happy I was in my life. There was enough sadness and I'm sure since he is not a dummy, he was always and intelligent little boy, that he realize a lot of things and he felt for us I'm sure. I saw no reason to talk about what was not really necessary. The way I felt.

How did your experience as a survivor affect your attitude towards religion?

I don't think that surviving or losing or the whole tragedy had anything to do with the way I see religion or the way I believe. I believe my upbringing is what makes me feel and believe and understand and be the person I am. I might not be the best person but

whatever I am, it is because of my mother, my father, because of the life with my aunts at home and with my sisters with my brother.

Do you feel that the Americans, in general take freedom for granted?

Well, I really am not an American so I can't really speak for them. I can only say how I feel. They ... I'm sure that I'm probably, for better or for worse, am different because I lived a different life and I have been ... When I was young, it probably... took me in directions that were different than when I grew older. But all the times and all the happiness have shaped my life. They have shaped my character for better or for worse. I am what I really lived because how could it be otherwise? I always lived with this still as part of my life.

Yes. Just one more question. What lessons do you feel we should learn from the Holocaust?

[Tape cuts out.]

What we should ... You ask me what we should learn about the Holocaust?

Yeah.

To begin with, when I came here to America, I must say that I felt looked-down upon. I felt sometimes, and I wouldn't say that everybody did this, that my impression was about everyone or anybody, that I have encountered, but more often than not, I felt inadequate. I felt that I came like with a baggage and many times I would go to sleep and I would think about it. So I didn't feel comfortable with this feeling because I still didn't feel free. I wanted to be just a human being and I wanted to be treated as one, as such. I feel that the most important thing is a word that is probably very common. Try to be kind. Try to be gentle, especially with someone that went through life with a lot of hurt. And I believe that wherever we see the meanness, whether it's just with a little word and worse even with a deed, that we should try to stop and think maybe we become better people and we do much for whatever is good. We should always try, wherever we see anything this evil, try and stop it. Whether in a small way and if we have the opportunity, and a big one, it is the way I think I might be wrong but that's how I feel and this is what I say.

That's very good. Thank you.

[Tape cuts out.]

...poem. She wrote it several years ago and I've asked her to read for us. It is very emotional for her but she is going to read it for us.

**I want the world to understand my torn soul that will never mend,
I want the world to be with me when in agony I stand.**

**I want the world to walk with me, to never change my history,
to recall it step-by-step to not ever, ever forget.
They were my life, my sweet melody, my hopes that only a child can bring.
So gentle, so kind and, oh, so young...
Couldn't you help stretch out your hand? No pity now.
It's too late for that.
My plea to the world, do not distort, respect my past.
Is it too much to ask?
I have found a place to be, a land of freedom, liberty.
They have taken on the task, a National Holocaust Memorial at last.
Here is where I will sing my song, full of sadness and wrong,
of a home of warm and trust, of the ones I loved and lost.
Here is where I'll bring my son...
Here is while he'll bring his own...
Here my tears will flow in pain. Here I'll hope, meditate.
Here I'll bow my head and wonder how the world had gone astray.
Here is where I'll say the *kaddish*. Here in silence, I will pray.
For the six millions that perished in so tragic awesome way.
Maybe here this soul of mine with its deep forlorn cry might find peace at last in time.**

That was beautiful.