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Maria Devinki Interview
October 13, 1999

And I'm interview Maria Devinki in her office, it is 3:15, October 13, 1999. Ok so, we'll start out pre-war, where you were born. Your name, like I mentioned your name when you were born, and what was that?

Well actually, my original name was totally different.

That's what we want to know!

Ok, Mala, M-A-L-A, I don't know how you spell it here. Braun. B-R-A-U-N I don't

You pronounce it BROWN, not BRAUN?

That's the German BROWN.

And I was born in Germany and we lived in Poland.

So what took you from Germany to Poland?

Those years my family was in Germany, was living, my father was originated from there. And he use to come, they had, not too much of a distance from Germany to Poland to cross the border from like state line, like Kansas and Missouri. But my schooling I start in Poland. That mean I was a little girl when we moved.

What city were you born in, in Germany?

Hannover.

Hannover? What city did you live in, in Poland?

I lived in two different cities. Sosnowiec, and Wodzislaw

Wodzislaw.

Yeah. You don't know how to spell it I'm sure.

No. Do you know how to spell it?

Do I have to do it? [Laughing]

Say, can you say it out loud? Cause we want to get it on… Oh, you'll write it down. Fine.

W-O-D-Z-I-S-L-A-W

Ok, yeah you're right I would never….

[All my life?] Sosnowiec you don't need to spell it because you have a lot of people…

and is this city still, this town still in existence?

It is. It's a very small town, that's because there was a lot of Jews living in that town.

And this, this was a small town?

Yes, and now it's a smaller town. We was, I would probably say about six thousand families Jewish were living there.

And what, what was the non-Jewish population?

Probably about between 12, and 18 thousand. It was a small city.

But you were a very large part?

Yes, it was quite a Jewish city.

What did your father do for a living when you moved?

He was an export. He was in the Army, in World War I. And we, he actually lined up in Hannover because of his business. There was import and export after the war, like, like they do here. Wool clothes or whatever.

Wool?

No, clothes, manufacturing things. They were left over from the army.

Oh, I see

Kind of a big, big business in those years.

Right.

Then when we moved to that small city, of course, I wouldn't even know how to start, when they got married my parents or what. Because I have record, even if I heard this, I wouldn't remember. But when they moved to the small city as being in the army, he had a some kind of bigger rank or whatever; whatever you get when you're above a soldier. I don't know that part of the country how you go in that conversation, and he got permission to have certain things what that small country or that small city couldn't get without the state's, like what they have here, license, whatever. He had license for imports. So, he could bring wine, he could bring chocolate, he could, lot of things was not. You couldn't buy cigarettes without license. You couldn't buy salt without license. It was a number of goods in those years; coffee, chocolate, it was very difficult to get.

So his, with his army connections he was able to get his license?

To get all those things.

I see.

And that's what we continued. It was a smaller city, was more profitable and we did very well.

So you, you grew up in a fairly affluent family then?

Yes.

And with your father in export, before when he lived in Germany, you also were an affluent family? You lived an affluent life?

Uh-huh.

So, Okay.

It was three children. Older brother, myself and a younger brother.

And how much older was your brother?

My oldest brother was three years older than I was. And my youngest one was five years younger than I.

Were you born in a, when you lived in Germany, were you born, so were you born in a hospital, were you born at home?

No, no hospital.

At home, born in a home.

Yes.

What were your parents' names?

My mother's name was Regina Rosenberg

Spell that?

Rosenberg, you have that name in the United State too.

R-O-S-E-N-B-E-R-G?

My father's name was Solomon Braun.

She went by Braun?

After…

After she got married. Right. Do you know how your parents met?

I know my father come for a very, very, of course they both from very highly religious people, but my father come from a family of like, I don't know how they would call here, not exactly just Rabbis but more than Rabbis. I can't go in, I don't know, in English what you use for this, like a *shoykhit* [Yiddish: ritual slaughterer; Hebrew: *shochet*], like his father was Dave Braun and he was the *shoykhit* for his city. And all my uncles living in that city, quite a few uncles, they all was in that, that highly religious people.

Aw that's, that's nice. And, in your father's business, did your mother help at all in the business or did she just work at home?

Actually, in my years when I remember, because I didn't come the first one, her older brother, until I got sense to understand what business, I, I know my mother was a part of it.

She was a part of it……really?

Yes, yes.

Really…

Yes

So, was that an unusual thing?

No. Matter of fact, that in the religious field the woman did a lot more business while the men were more practicing like Judaism and studying and take the boys every afternoon to another room and study.

Cheder and… So, so she was

So, a woman was doing more than her share.

Really, that's interesting.

And all my years, I remember, we always had a housekeeper like a Jewish who come in and take care of the children. Even we had a lady sit in the house doing the sewing for us, like clothes for the boys, for me. So, I know we always had some help cause my mother was involved. And that's what, then later when I was…

Your heritage!

Older, by then, I had to be five or six years old before I understood, all life.

Did the family that, your father you said had a large family, did your mother have a large family also?

No. My father come from a family of four brothers and one sister. And his mother comes from a family of seven sisters and three brothers. Very good size family. My mother comes from a family, because in her case, she lost her mother when she was nine years old. So she, and there was three of them. And when her father remarried, they had another three. So, there was six, and she not brothers and sisters, but step.

You say they came from a religious families, was your parents, do you even know this, were your parents' marriage arranged? OK, a lot we don't know and don't even remember to ask. Did you know your grandparents?

I know one, my grandfather, my mother's father. I remember him, he was 83 when the war broke out in 1939. He was a old man. I remember with that stick walking around with a long white beard. I even have a picture. And I remember my father's mother. She was a sick woman as long as I remember. She was always a sick woman. Maybe in Europe you know, you didn't have the, somebody's not feeling good, they call him always, find him in a situation like this. But I remember the family, I was in occasion to a wedding, and I remember on one event, we had a cousin marry and they said the family was just 93 of just family people.

Ninety-three?

Yes. And except guest as well. I was not involved in all, everything, because I was goin' to a, like here's Hebrew Academy, we had *Bays Yakov.* It's a school for girls, for religious girls. And I attended school. So those kind of girls that makes everyplace, they have to wear different clothes, dark socks, a little bit different then when I was 16.

Now did you go, was that school in your town?

Yes, yes.

And all… did your brothers also go to a school for boys?

My older brother went to a Yeshiva all his years. My younger brother, no. My younger brother was six years old. In fact he was born '25, the war broke out '39, 14 years old.

Did your, the school that you went to, was, it was just for the people in your town, the Jewish people?

Just for girls.

And just the girls in your town?

Just in the town.

Did you mix at all with any non-Jewish people in your town?

Yes, public school. You have to go. There was a law. You have to go to public school regardless you have a private Jewish school. But also, there was a law you have to go seven grades you have to finish. Every child has to finish seven grades in public school.

Oh, and then you went as like in high school? You went to the…

No, no, no, I was going to public school. We had from eight to three, we had public school. And from three to six we have Hebrew school. Like here.

Like, like here yeah. Everyday.

Then of course when I was in *gymnasium*, I was still going to the Jewish school.

That's interesting.

So, we had in Krakow, I don't know if any of those survivors brought this to your attention, we had a woman named Sarah Schenierer. She was the one create those girl schools in Europe. She was very, very popular, it's even. Matter of fact I had a lady from out of town come in and trying to organize something in Kansas City, other cities, and she found out that I was a student of Sarah Schenierer she brought me all her books and want me to help her organize, and I said, we have a Hebrew Academy, let's not start again. It's not a city for that much orthodox.

She wanted to start that kind of a school here?

She's really an American girl. When she was in Krakow, she discovered who Sarah Schenierer was and what a deed she did in that country. Actually, she did it in Poland not in Germany. And how successful she was. There was a lot of support, after we finished

this we could go to the Yavneh. The Yavneh was the high school. And then come out, not this a *rebitsen* [Yiddish: rabbi's wife; often used to connote someone very traditionally observant], But highly more more sophisticated in the Jewish field.

Did the school that you went to start in kindergarten, first grade, how?

No, didn't start in our city until I was eight years old. So I went from eight to sixteen.

And the boys did exactly the same thing?

No, the boys start when they're kids. They start when they are three or four years old going to a Jewish school and then follow up with the Yeshiva, if they, if they are qualified.

Did they go to public school at the same time?

Oh yes, oh yes, both my brothers finished seven grades.

Did all the Jewish kids in your town go to this? All the kids went to this?

To what?

To the Hebrew school, the after school? Not all…

No, that was a paid school. This was not free.

And it was for just the very observant?

In the first place you have to observant, you have to want to do this, and you have to be able to…

Pay.

Pay.

And the family that you saw, that you said you saw at weddings and things, did they live near you?

Yes, they lived in that city, most of them. Not, some of them arrived from Sosnowiec, from Kielce from [?] cities.

Did you, did you have, like we have, Passover *seder* and all the family come?

No, no each family has a Passover seder by himself.

So, if you had a Passover seder at your house there would be maybe six or eight people?

No, there'd be my family. We might invite the grandparents if they're old enough not to be able to…

Do it themselves.

…conduct the whole thing by themselves and was the pleasure to listen because they have a better way of conducting. Or, you have a older aunt and she's a widow, somebody like this. But we don't got together family with family, and able to do this.

Now did you, what was your home like? Did you, were you, obviously you were able to afford a nice home, so you live in a single family home?

No, we have pretty good size home, in its kind. Matter of fact I will try, my mother took possession of our housing in that city after the war in 1945, and I have all the documents of the papers, my mother passed away. And everybody's after me to go back and try to get ……

She took possession of your original home after the war?

Yes, in 1945.

How did she do that?

How? Because she have all the documents that, what belong to her and her parents.

We, I'm going to detour here for a minute because I have a question. How would she have if she was, was your mother in the camp?

Hiding.

She was in hiding? That's why she still has documents. I see. OK. I wondered how people kept pictures and documents and things like that.

Yes, she was in hiding.

That's lucky. So what was your house like?

Our house was, frankly I tell you this size. If I describe a house here, like 3500 to 4000 square feet.

That's how big your house was?

Yes, one story.

Wow!

Whole length of the street. Like we live…

Was that unusual?

No, it all depends. We didn't build it. It was 200 years old. Because our grandparents, from my mother's side built like a "L" shape, straight one way and straight the other way, and all this belong to his children. Every child get one of those like, they know the [Polish street name] and [Polish street name] belong to [family surname: Schlanski?]. It was not, it's like a block this way and a block this way. And I have all of those papers, what I'm trying to, I'm not going to go back to Poland, don't need it.

So what's going on with the house then?

We've got someone to live there.

Are they, do they rent it?

The government took it over.

So does somebody think they own that building and you just have to go reclaim it?

Actually, it's reclaimed, it's on record that Regina Braun is survive, is survivor, the only survivor, from the family. At that time I was young so I have no interest, of course I was the daughter. So who am I to ask for it, the mother is lie. And now everything you have go, present those paperwork and you have right to sell it or the Government want to buy it, or some stranger who lives there is willing to buy. And I have family when they went to Europe, whom we asked them to see what's still sitting there, because, you know, after so many years, and they claimed it's still in good shape and everything between the land, it's a lot of land there with it, it's still around.

So, this house, that your, your mother's parents…

I grow up in this house.

Your mother's parents have this house and each of your mother's parent's children had a section of this house?

A section of, each one has a part. The way that's was built was as a main street. And I don't know if you don't know Europe, it's difficult for you to understand. But if you see sometimes pictures when they have stores in the front, living quarters in the back and the garden, way, way. That's why the land was sold.

Did you have electricity?

Yes, we had electricity in 1934.

And did you have plumbing and running water?

We had plumbing but not running water.

Did you have your own room?

Yes, oh yes, I had my own, and my brothers has his room.

So, both your brothers had their own rooms?

Their own rooms.

So did, the part that your family had, was it four bedrooms?

It was actually more than this. We had, we had a big living room, what they called a salon, not a room but salon. And then attached to this was a dining area, and one [?]. And then goes, I can see the house from that… And then goes straight ahead a room, this side of the room, this side a room, this side. And in the back of the last room was the kitchen. The kitchen was small, very small kitchen. Not to sit, just to cook.

And you had, did you have a cook?

That woman be, live in the house, she did the cooking, washing and everything.

Did she do the…

You see laundry was not like here where you have a washing machine and dryer. And she start doing laundry, it took her two days.

Yeah, how did she do the laundry?

Out by a barrel with all kinds of *chazerie?* [Yiddish: junk; odds and ends]]

Did she, did she live in your house?

Yes.

And how many people, was that the only person you had living in your home?

Yes.

Was it an unusual thing to have a servant like that living in your home?

No, it was not unusual.

Lots of people?

Lots of people

And this was a Jewish woman?

Sure, has to be. [?]

Right, right, right.

Did you take vacations, your family take vacations?

I, yes. Sure, my mother was going daddy [sent her?]. But I was taking lot of vacations myself, in school.

Oh, on school trips?

Every groups we went to Krakow, to Katowice too, it all depends on what we, I traveled a lot. I know Europe like I know myself.

Did you travel a lot with your school?

With my school, with my friends and with my mother I went maybe twice or three time to Krynice… Krynice is like here, like Palm Springs, let's say that, but that was in the mountain.

Like, like…

A resort?

Resort, yes.

And, let's see here, what kind of foods did you eat?

Everything homemade.

I was going to say, there was certainly no fast food.

That we have to buy, rolls we have to buy. But challahs, we make our own cakes, we make our own……

Did you have, so, your mother didn't do any of the cooking?

Yeah, for holidays.

So, did you have special things, was she a good cook for special things?

Yes, my mother was a very good cook.

Did she teach you to cook?

She teach I, I was not too much a housekeeper. I was too young because first I was a student, oh till the war broke out. So, but you learn. I remember Thursday night she make a *piterkiche* [Yiddish: buttercake] cake, you know what is from, butter, a cake, like a coffee cake here, but that's was the real McCoy.

The real McCoy. And what's it called?

***Piter*-cake.**

Piter-cake.

Butter cake. And of course a cheese cake. Everything Thursday night, because Friday that goes to the bakery. They didn't bake you know, goes to the bakery and the challahs.

What did you do on Shabbat?

Shabbat? Parents went to services. Kids didn't go to services. And the last was like the blessing of the month. Once a month you have a blessing of the month. So, our school, the Bays Yakov, insist for us we have to walk, there was not something. You cannot drive and not every synagogue that was close to the house. So, we had to walk. So we, all the girls got together, our teacher took us to school, to *shul*.

Did you have a car? Did your family have a car?

We have trucks cause all those imports.

Imports. Right! So that was your family car, the truck?

Yes, there was… no, we didn't drive, nobody from us drove.

You never drove? No place to go?

We had a chauffeurs, what you call here.

Driver, yeah driver.

The chauffeur. That was non-Jewish people.

But your driver didn't drive the truck?

Yeah, that's what they did.

Oh, really, you had a driver, and if you wanted to go someplace…

Well, my Father didn't know how to drive, my brother know how to drive.

And if you wanted to go somewhere the chauffeur….

You took a bus, wherever it goes. Or you took a train.

Oh, that's interesting. In your, I was gonna ask you about your… In the synagogue, was it a situation like you have here, like you go, and the families, everybody sits in their own place. This is the same place that every single…

Oh yeah, it was assigned places, with a pact. You cannot sit in somebody's place. You pay for it too. You buy your seat for life, and God forbid something happen to you, your children take over.

Oh really.

Yeah. This is your seat forever.

And how many synagogues did you have in your town?

We actually have a main synagogue….one, and have like small. Like we didn't call it synagogue, we call *shtibl* [Yiddish: "little room"; refers to a small one room synagogue].

Shtibl

A *shtibl* like a small synagogue.

Like a neighborhood kind of synagogue?

Like a, where the Hasidim didn't walk to *shul,* but they have their own group, 50 people, hundred people, whatever it calls for. The main synagogue was big, and when I look at that picture it reminds me of our synagogue. It was a beautiful synagogue, high ceilings, paintings on the ceilings and the columns was something. And I understand when the Germans took over, I was told, of course I never went to Poland. When the Germans took over, they used it for the storage for wheat because it was so high. And it's just a shamble.

That's a killer, isn't it?

Ah, it was, it was one of the most beautiful and the age, for what I understand it's like four or five hundred years old.

Is it still standing?

It's still standing but it's in shambles.

But it's a mess. I have this picture.

You see this, the trouble is that city is now so poor because all the business belong to Jews.

All the Jews were all the business owners there?

Most of them. Ninety-nine percent. The non-Jewish people were there just had, like their butcher shops, or the *hasidishe* stuff… whatever, or they had their beer joints and farmers, where they come from the farms, for like… Every Monday was a market and they coming with all the goods from the farm. And they put all the goods from the Jewish people like clothes, shoes whatever.

So, the whole town, was your whole town not a poor town?

Oh no it was a very, the Jews were very wealthy the *goyim* was wealthy too, but yes, that's not a [poor?] poor city, no, no.

How were you treated by the non-Jews?

It's questionable. For a long time we had very good life. I mean me, I'm talking about me, 'cause I never heard in my house or anything going on but we lived in a neighborhood, not a Jewish neighborhood. We lived on a main street. And across the street from us was a drug store and the other side from our things was the City Hall. [Someone enters] Hi honey… It was the City Hall.

Across the street from you?

Yeah, opposite side. And the *burgermeister* [German: mayor] lived there, *burgermeister* is the mayor. So, there was, all surrounded by, and this was all my friends, and I practically lived with them. Even our observing, they appreciate the way, kind of Jews we are. I was not the only Jew in that neighborhood. There was probably, I would say like 25 to 30% of Jewish people living in that area. Other areas was like 90% Jewish people. And I have girlfriends who I went to school with them, especially the [?] daughter was my age and we, we was good friends. Raised together. But in '39, we had a little problem I went to *gymnasium*, it started like '37, 38. They started putting in matches in our coats, the boys in our girl's coats.

Matches?

Yes.

Lit matches?

Lit matches! And then we discovered we thought of as jokers and then we discovered it's just the Jewish girl's coats. Then others start calling us names. When Hitler start in Germany and that whole thing, when, because it was so close, because Wodzislaw and Sosnowiec were just a strip, so we know exactly, what's all about it and it started getting a little bit rough. Not everybody had the kind of feeling it's going to be bad because we

didn't have television, we didn't have all this. The paper that come in on Sunday and they tell you a little bit about it, what's going on in Germany, but they don't tell you exactly and don't forget, we lost our *Marszalek* [Polish: marshal: military rank] this was like the like the president here, Piłsudski. He was good for Jews.

That was the president of Poland?

Of Poland. He was very good for Jews; 1936 he passed away.

Was it. Marshutsky?

Marshu… Piłsudski.

Ok.

And a guy took over with the name *Marszalek*… Mościcki, and he was more Nazi. He was a Poland, but he was more with the Germans. And a little bit start going the wrong direction. But we didn't fear that much because he was like a better class of Jews according to the non-Jewish people, till everything start bad. That girl what I'm saying across the street from the drug store, we was raised together as children. When the war start, she says to me "I cannot talk to you." I said "Krisha, what do you mean you cannot talk to me, why?" "You Jewish!" Till then, she didn't know the difference between me and her. It was just spoken as friends.

And neither did you?

We didn't know it mean something. But then she said she cannot talk to me anymore, and that's when the whole thing started. Of course, again it's a long story. I got off on my track.

That's OK. I know I'm suppose to keep you on this track but I'm interested in the other track too. We'll come back; we will come back to that. I want to know a little more about your childhood first. Did you have a bicycle?

Oh yeah. We all three had bicycles. I had my woman bicycle and they have the man bicycle.

Did you have pets?

I have a dog. I had a dog

What was your dog's name?

[Brishka?].

And how old were you when you got your dog?

Three years.

Ah, and how long did you have it?

Fifteen years.

Ahh, my Gosh! How old were you when you went to the camp?

Nineteen.

That's a long time to have a dog.

They killed it.

They did? Did you see it?

They stole him away from our house and they took away our... We was not allowed to live in the house anymore, because it was facing a main street. And we would see the soldiers working, we would see, you know. The Jewish should not see them. We should close our eyes. So, they blocked off this and there was no ghetto but they pushed us in the back where our servants were living.

And did they take your servants away? Oh, the servants were Jews.

The servants quit, and we had assigned a housekeeper. We had servants for the house and for the building around. And those servants had quarters, a kitchen; a bedroom a kitchen, you know, whatever. We have to move in those places and they moved in our house. Because they were non-Jewish.

Oh you had non, a non-Jewish woman. So you said you were 19 when you went to the camps. So there were, so you still had your teenage years? You went to the camps in what year?

I did in, I went in '39/'40 we start working for. Didn't exactly left the city. We had to go to work everyday and allowed to come back until nine or ten months later they start taking us to different places.

So you had…

Like the beginning, let's say they were not organized yet, what to do with us in the '40s, in the first year '40. They come in September 1, '39. So that would give enough time between what to do with us.

Yeah, make a decision. OK, so you had most of your teenage years in fairly happy life, in school……..

Oh, yeah. Oh yes, we had a wonderful life. I finished public school, I finished *Bays Yakov*, I went three years to *seminarium* to what they call here… whatever, *gymnasium.*

Like college?

Like college, if you go four years to there you're a teacher; you could be a teacher. You could be anything. You could go like a business school.

What did you study?

Math.

Math?

I was very good in math. And I want to be a teacher of math.

Did you have? This wasn't a Jewish school?

No, no, no.

What did you and your friends do for fun? Did you have parties, did you have clubs?

Oh, yes. We had fun all the time. For example, in my field, we had a Hanukkah parties, Purim parties, this kind of thing. And normally we went to theatre, we took us a group that went to a larger city like Saturday night and we traveled like twelve, fifteen miles away from our city. It was a larger city and had more entertainment. We went there as a group, but always the girls separate, the boys separate.

Did you take the bus?

Yeah, oh yeah, yes. We took bus.

And you went to the large city, is that where you would go to the theatre and you would have parties too…..only holiday parties?

Holiday parties.

But boys and girls got together?

Yeah.

Did you date?

I officially didn't date, but I had a friend.

Ahhh, it's coming out here!

I married my friend.

Ahhh, so you knew your husband, before everything? Was he from your town?

Yes.

Oh, so he is your first boyfriend.

Uh huh.

Did your parents approve?

My only boyfriend.

Your only boyfriend? Your parents didn't approve?

No.

Why not?

Because they were not there to approve. I married in '42. How could they approve anything?

Did you know him when you were a younger teenager?

Yes.

Did they know him?

Yes.

And did they like him?

There was not something like as a friend, I had brothers. So, you know boys come to boys and if it's a girl in the house it's a part of it.

So, they never thought……

It was nothing to think of it.

Did they, did your parents…….

You see, in those years we was thinking about the *shidokh* [Yiddish: arranged marriage], has to be put together from two different parents and families, stuff like that.

But they could have, you could have said "I want to marry this man," they would have to find you somebody.

No, we was not allowed to say this, no children would tell parents anything like this. If this happened they called it, it's not the right girl that I thought.

Would they, they would have to find you….

As a rule yes. Ninety percent of marriages was pre-arranged. There was some…..

So, weren't you about the age where they would try to arrange something? Eighteen, nineteen, that's not the age where you……..

No. The time was start getting to '38 and '39 before even Hitler come in: start getting tough because the country, everything was in [unclear place name] they had the problem, German, one in [unclear place name] Czechoslovakai [Polish: Czechoslovakia], then Poland. Poland was the third one, we already was for three years goin' on and uncomfortable.

Uncomfortable. Did you play an instrument? Did you have music?

Yeah, I did.

Did your brothers?

Yeah.

Did you have, so you never… Oh, so you never really worked. When you would go out to the parties or wherever you went to the theatre, did you have any curfew, were they strict?

No, no.

You were a good girl and they trusted you.

Nobody, nobody come home after ten o'clock.

Ten o'clock everybody's home no matter what.

That's right!

Very cute!

There was no such a midnight parties.

OK. And you were an observant family and so you kept kosher, we talked about that……Ok. This is great because you've answered so many questions in the context of just you talking. Ah,

so it was never a problem for you to meet Jewish people or only be with Jewish people, because that was your life? When you went out, did you ever go with-out… with non-Jewish people?

No.

Like the girl you said you were raised with in the drugstore …….

Yeah, that was not to party, we just do homework together. We could get together like three, four years, could be two Jewish and two non-Jewish and did our homework. In my house or their house or somebody's house.

But it was never, never social?

No. We never party together. It was very close as a matter of fact. We had dinner we invited them. They had dinner they invited us. We bought our own meals but we do it in their house.

But you went to each other's homes for dinners?

Yeah.

When you were in school, did you learn English?

Yeah.

Did you know anything about America?

No. I know from the map. I was pretty good. That was my good subjects, map, history and *geografia*. I don't know how you say it in English.

Geography?

Geography. So that's why I know America because I was making those maps from Africa, from South America from…

America could have been the same as Africa? You just knew what it was?

Yeah, I just didn't know the difference between the countries. But when I do the sketches of it and paint it, the green here and the blue there, that's what I remember about it.

So, it's not like "someday I want to go to America." That was never……

A story about America I tell you, it's a funny one. My mother told us once a story. She was engaged to a guy in Lodz, if you ever heard of the city, Litzmannstadt…

Yeah

That was a city where they manufactured goods, materials. And the war broke out and of course they was taking boys to the, to the army, especially when you're 21. And their son suppose to go to the army, to the war in 1917, '13 whatever. Their father send him to the United States, they were wealthy enough, they paid whatever. And he want my mother to follow him and get married in the United States to avoid the army. Like we had the Vietnam here and kids went to…….

Canada?

Canada. This was a similarity. The way the story went because I was not a witness to it, and she said she trying to investigate, my mother was a very smart woman. What is America? Why America? He was tell her they sell people for slaves, in those years. We're talking about the 1913 whatever. They selling people, they didn't say slaves, from people to people, for money. And she says, oh no, to the future father-in-law. I'm going no place. I'm staying right here. If you want your son to come back, that's fine otherwise let's call it off. And when we survived and we came to that country she make a comment, she said in Jewish, of course if you know Jewish it's okay otherwise you wouldn't understand the expression. She said "*Kop zol lign. Di fis trogn.*" [Yiddish: where the head rests, the feet will carry]. That mean where your head have to be buried, your feet will take you. She was seventeen she was engaged and she refused to go to that country because of so and so. But when she was 50, or whatever age we got here she, and she's buried here.

She finally made it yeah.

That's was the joke about……

She finally made it.

Yeah.

So, America was never any kind of big deal. What about Israel? Was Zionism, did you think…….

My older brother was planning in the'36 to go to *Hachsharah* [Hebrew: refers to training farms preparing people to immigrate to Palestine], there was a *Hachsharah,* like they have *kibbutz* in Israel, they have in Warsaw, *kibbutzs*.

In Warsaw?

Yes. For those children what they're goin' and help out the Jews in Israel. Then of course it was Palestine, it was not Israel. But there was organizers in Jews in the religious field in the *Zion… Zionistishe* field, there were several organizations, in '36. But my mother didn't like…

Really. She did not believe in Israel?

She believed but she did not want to get, lose.

Yeah. Alright. When it start getting '39, you know '37, things start looking uncomfortable, did you ever think about leaving? Did your family think about going anywhere?

No, no, no we didn't know a place where to go.

Was the feeling like sort of complacent…

Then Hitler come into our city. We didn't believe it was ever going to happen. We always thought, Ok he took the ownership cause there's this according to the newspaper. This is territory what belong to Germany, years, years back. Then he was…

(End of Tape 1, Side 1)
(Beginning of Tape 1, Side 2)

And you weren't worried until Hitler came and said "parts of these countries do belong to Germany." So did you, did your family and the Jewish community think, "well maybe it does, maybe he should have that back.

Nobody. We was feeling so comfortable that he's not going to come. Why would he go to Poland to a country that's compares to Germany. We know, we lived in Germany, we travelled to Germany. It was wealth, it was more sophisticated, more educated. Why would he come to Poland, a poor country. Farmers, farm country. Of course, food was basic business in, in Poland. And a lot of food was going to Germany. I remember our trucks were carrying eggs to Germany. That was very important. They didn't have that kind of growth of food.

So, so when all this started to happen in '37, '38, '39 when things were, Hitler came and thinking he might take over Germany… or Poland……..

Even in '39 when he was already taking over our city and other cities whatever.

You didn't think anything would happen?

We couldn't think of anything like this. You know, and another thing, my father was in World War I. And you know it's a war goes to the fight the army. He was too old to worry about himself. He was worried about maybe the children, they will call him, and the youngest one was too young. But he didn't think it's goin' to happen, anything like that. And my mother said, I remember stories she use to say: When the German come in, in those years, I remember she said, '13 or '17, whatever age, I mean year……

1913, you mean the first war?

Yes. She said they were so polite and especially she was speaking very well German because we lived in Germany. She said everything was so nice. They couldn't think of a German to be the way later came out.

And your father in the First World War fought on the side of Germany?

That's right, no way there could be nobody, not just us, but thousand of other people.

Were you, were you surprised, I'm sure you were, surprised at the reaction to the Polish people how they got on the German bandwagon?

You see, frankly, we was very disappointed and blame more the Polish than the German for our, our personal things. And the reason is the German didn't know who I am, who the other Jewish women is or who the other Jewish man is. If they wouldn't pinpoint it, see this is two Jewish girls, okay, go kill them. So, the German took the gun and give it to them, he says, you kill them, they did. Why, they didn't kill us because we Jews. Because we rich or wealthier than they are, and they can come in and rob us, and take everything away from us. Because the guy who live in the back of us and was doing the service for the, for our housing said to my mother, right, three or four months later. "I'm goin' move into your apartment. I talked to the *burgermeister* and he told me I have permission." And she said "What? Do you realize you are working for us?" And he said, "Not any longer. You're goin' to work for me."

So, when the war… not when the war, when the Germans came in and you said it was…what year did you say you started working in, you had to go to work?

'40s.

So, what was going… In 1939 you were still in school.

No, no, no, no. School for Jews was closed.

Okay, what, what…

Matter of fact I was in September. I was out of town, and I come home maybe three days before the German come in.

You were on a vacation?

I was in Krakow, yes. Three or four days before they come into our city because it was before the holiday, the high holidays. So, I had to come home and when they come in, it was a joke. They went through with their motor…

Motorcycles.

Motorcycles two soldiers in the front, two in the back and they keep their guns like this because, to be secure that nobody's going to attack them. They drove by the street, we didn't think of anything, we went back and cooked our meal and eat our dinner. But, day by day, day by day.

So, so, you were in school. What changed, what year and what changed? These people that you see, more and more Germans came in your town and then they made a decree that……

They're settled around in the vicinity where they're safe. They took over schools, buildings, for the [safe?]. They took over coffee shops where they have all kind of places to celebrate, to…….

What do you mean they took over?

The Germans.

They put Germans in there working?

Yes

And what year was this?

This was in, right when they come in, three or four months later. Soon they find out it's a safe place to settle, they also was afraid. You have to understand they didn't come in an army a million. They come in a few hundred soldiers. So, they had to secure themselves, where they can settle; cause the Poles was also against them. They, they don't want to give up their country. But, as much as it was against them, they helped them surprise the Jews. This is, that was the difference. And it was the *Armia Krajowa* [the ultra-nationalist Polish underground], this is the army what was against the German. They was killing Jews and killing Germans.

Tell me again what year this was?

In the forties

In the forties. What year did you, you did two years of sort of college?

That was '36, '36, '37, '38. The end of '38 in May, I was already at home.

And then what did you do in '38?

I was at home.

You didn't go to work?

No, no I didn't. I was, had lot more studying to do but the time was not so good financially already, because the start… a lot of business you couldn't... The war started actually before '39. Not in our city but in Europe all together. So, I was doing business with other countries too. Was not really healthy for everything, and even in our field.

So, '38 and '39, what were you doing? You were just home?

I probably helped my parents to run the business. My brother was working as a bookkeeper.

And was your younger brother in school or could not go to school?

He was, no, in '39 no schools. All schools was closed.

So what did he do?

Plenty.

Hung around the house with his friends?

Another, [?] what else, go to Jewish *cheders* we had to hide if we go to Jewish schools. Because we was afraid we'd be attacked.

And so when did you go to work…..the Germans put you to work?

'40

1940, where did you work?

We worked, in the beginning we had to separate. Like for example, I belonged to a group of little more educated people. So those girls went to work too, like exactly hospital, but places where you can help a sick person, you can put a bandage on, you can help them, wash them up, close them up, not particularly Jews, but any sick person. Because there were no hospital open for private people, just for the army. So, we had to, and broke up, epidemic broke up, typhus and then they was afraid to send this nurses, the German nurses to do anything. So, they used private people, what they could help. And, this was, we went around and picked up clothes to change for those people.

Did you get sick?

No. They separate us. They send us to courses to learn how to do this. And there were no shots in those years, it was just medication, whatever. But somehow, you know what helped us? They have in every place we went in was a bottle of 180 proof alcohol to wash our hands.

And did some people, you were worked in a hospital, what did your mother do?

I really don't think she did anything.

She didn't have to go to work?

Not in '39, in '40. Forty we all had to go to work. Everybody in different departments.

Did your father's, was you father's business still….

My father was sent away to Treblinka. They sent him to another camp. From camp to camp, he [?] in Treblinka. We didn't even…

What year was he sent away?

'41

But I mean before all this, before. When you're working in '39, '38-'39, was your father's business still….did he still have his business?

Very little, very little business. He had a little money stucked [*sic*] away. And we had lot of money on [PKO?: Polish treasury organization?] and they didn't release any money already. They was holding back.

Who didn't release the money?

[PKO?] It's like here the government like where you buy government paper.

Like treasury Bonds or something?

Yes, like treasury.

So, you had that money invested?

Yes, in them.

And you didn't get that?

No. And my father was given a pension as an army man, and he didn't get this either. So, everything changed to a point

Did they have factories where the……..

Not in our city.

So, if someone wasn't so well educated, where would they go? What did they do to put them to work?

They probably work on the streets. But we have to build streets like near where I was working. We had to throw the sand and the man put it in the concrete, or the stoves, by the bricks. And the girls had to throw the sand, shovel it, stuff like this.

So how long did you work in the hospital situation?

That was till '41, maybe nine months, ten months, something like that.

And then what?

And then I start working, they took me away twelve miles, it was…

They took you away twelve miles?

Twelve miles from the city. It was a train station and we worked on the trains. Load and unload, load

Why? Why did they take you.

Not just me! A lot!

I know, but…

A truck come in and we all have to go on the truck, and they took us away because they need help.

They just needed you.

Wherever they need help, we were shuttled 'til they have concentration camps, took them a little while, and they opened Skarzysko [Skarzysko-Kamienna: a German forced labor complex in Poland], where they making ammunition then a lot, lot of our people went there. My two brothers went there; all my cousins went there. Some of us survive from there.

Did your brother survive?

My brother escape from there and went in hiding.

Which brother?

Both.

They escaped?

And, and they didn't survive, other was the Polish killed him. My younger, the 14-year-old was killed when he was 20. Five months after liberation by a Polish.

How do you live with that?

Yeah. How do you live with it? It's a very good question.

Are you angry?

Why not? Why shouldn't I?

Yeah, I would be. I'm angry and I didn't know your brother.

Why shouldn't I be?

I'm angry and I didn't…

That brother, in three month's time, he survived. He was liberated the 18th of January. By the first of May he was the richest Jew, not in this city, but in the whole county.

Your younger brother?

Yeah

From doing, what did he do?

We, when we had those trucks he was too young, but he know how to drive. Of course he wouldn't go on a truck, because my father, probably, who knows what do to him, but he knew how to drive. And he went and picked up an old truck, put it together, fix it up and went from city to city, bought merchandise and took food from that city, from that small city to cities people don't have what to eat after the war in 1945.

Like produce and things?

Produce and whatever.

They didn't have any bread, they didn't have any eggs, they didn't have any meat and he bring in the [?] loaded it up a truck and called this food and brought back for those people what the people exchanged it. Money was not important. A bicycle, a sewing machine,

Bartered!

A little material for a dress, matches, candles…..that's what's important for the farmers. And for the big city people, food was important.

So, he did the same thing your father did?

That's what I say. He was so young, picked up everything and he survived and May 1, if you ever heard that story saying there was a pogrom in Kielce, I don't know, you know, maybe that's [?]

Yeah, yeah, I know.

It was, that was the Polish people. What they discovered, so many people still coming back from camps. They were going to have Jews again in Poland. They make the pogrom and they went from small cities, bigger cities and he was between one of those, May 1. Now listen. I can sit with you all night and not finish with my story. Everybody has a story, you know. Each story different.

I know, I know and I know I need to keep on back on this.

I have a friend in New York. The same age as my brother. He survived; he was in Skarzysko. My brother saved him. He said he saved 37 Jews, from, at his age from that camp. And maybe from the 37, seven, eight is alive. And he said, if whenever we get together, weddings, events, he live in New York. He make that comment in front of a group of us. He says "and you think she's a big shot. If her brother would be alive he would own the country. He would be the president of the country." That is his statement.

That's nice. Nice legacy.

He was so smart, young, didn't prove anything. He didn't like my older brother's ideas. Go around with those *peyes* [Yiddish: sidelocks customarily worn by Hasidic Jewish men and boys], with those…

Oh, your brother was like that?

The older one. He think life has more to offer. But he didn't talk, he was not a talker. Mother said if you do that's okay. Daddy said if you have to go to bench, we bench, whatever. But deep down in his mind, his mind was going like a…..

Waiting for his time. OK, so you were, you were working, you were unloading on the trains and that was '41. And then what happened?

1942 I went to Skarzysko too, on that, on that truck where they ship us off to the ammunition place. And I was there six weeks and a Polish woman, a friend of mine from the city where we was doing business with them. And know my father so well, and did a lot of business with my father. He send out a woman to take me out from the camp.

Who could just, she could just take you out?

Yes, when we walk.

Now this is the camp that was in Poland? In your town?

Skarzysko-Kamienna that was a camp where they were making bullets, weapons, whatever, you know ammunition. And there was three departments, and one was the (unclear) department [prisoners were working with picric acid], where everybody got the yellow from it.

The what? Protein?

Yeah. Here they call it something else. That's what you put in to make it in the blew it goes out.

Gunpowder?

Something. I really can not explain in your language.

I know what you're talking about. I know what you're talking about.

This makes your skin yellow. And a lot of my, one of my aunts was there. She was, she was probably a younger woman, 50. And she come home, she survive. When she came home, her hair, her face, her whole body was yellow for at least ten years.

My gosh!

Yellow, I mean yellow! I mean more yellow than that paper!

My gosh!

Anyway, a lot of people survive from that camp. But that woman come in and I was described by her and I [would?] walked. There is hours in the morning when one… well actually it is a Ukrainian, not a German carried us back and forth. When he is in front and we girls would follow him. And we followed him, there was a *wachen* [German: guard], somebody stayed and watched it. But she was a woman with a little thing of a Polish woman, and nobody would even think that she's, she's just walking.

Was she wearing a *babushka* [Russian: kerchief]?

***Babushka*. And I walk through like that, she grabbed me by my hand and we walked away together. Nobody made an even effort. And she took me to a, to a gas station and she give me *babushka* too and a long skirt; and she took me to the Union Station, a train station, and we went home. And from that day on I was in hiding. I was 27 months in hiding.**

So, were you never in the camps?

That's all was my camping!

Really! So you were in hiding the whole time? So, who hid you? Your whole family? Who of your family hid?

My mother. Me and my mother.

And they already took your father?

Oh, my father was already in Treblinka.

Did you, so you were not home when, were you at home when your father was taken? And your brothers? Where did they go?

They went to Skarzysko.

Where?

Skarzysko.

Oh, so you came back…

This was for a while there. I don't even remember what year they left. But also, my, my younger brother did also shtick with a, with a soldier. He get him his boots, and he had these six gold pieces. And he said, "You can get my boots if you give me your uniform." And they exchanged

And so he was in hiding? That was your younger brother. And your older brother?

My older brother was there the longest time. And then he come back in '44, for some reason, I don't remember who brought him in because I was in hiding. But he was killed by Polish. When he went to hiding with them, with that family, he had his clothes, he had suits. He gave everything to the non-Jewish people before he left. The minute we move out from the house, we give everything to the… Then when he moved back in the house we give everything to the *burgermeister,* the mayor, because he lived next to us and. and he was close friends. And he picked up a couple of his suits. We have no money, come from the camp. I took a couple of his suits and tried to sell it from brother from that lady, she suppose to put them in hiding and sold it for and he sold it, 40, 40 zlotys. And he didn't want more than one. So, he was walking with the other one back to the hiding and with the 40 zlotys, he followed him, and come close to the Jewish cemetery, he took out the gun and said "give me the money, give me the suit." That for three months before….

That was the brother of the person…….

The older brother, that was the brother of the woman suppose to keep him in hiding.

How did you find someone to help you in hiding? To hide you?

That guy, what was doing business with my father he was an army man also. Very dedicated Polish army, official more then a *shlepper* [Yiddish: hanger on].

The one that your father got into business with to begin with?

Yeah, yes and he send in this woman to pick me up, and he keep track of me. He called the family, the woman and the husband. "I want you to keep her, keep them," Me and my mother, and later we were seven people. In beginning we were just… anyway, "And I will pay for them. If they survive you'll get paid for it. And if you do any harm to them you both going to go like them." And they were afraid of him. He was a big shot in the city.

But this was a different person that was going to hide your other brother?

No, that's totally different people. We had no connection. Everything far apart. We were not family, you were no brother, you were no sister, you no mother. You don't even know where anybody is.

I was going to ask you, did you even know your brother was in hiding.

No.

And you didn't know anything until after the war about your other brother?

Everything was separated. And the difference….

So where did you go? Where were you in hiding?

On a farm. In [?]

Was it in your area, near your town?

Yeah, it was far. Seven or eight miles away from the town.

How long were you in hiding?

27 months

You said that, 27 months. And what did you do?

I, I was sewing for the woman in the, in the bunker.

They built you a bunker?

Bunker, yeah

Did you, were you ever in danger of being caught?

150 times. Every time the *Gestapo* come on the farm, they were coming for food of course, they coming for farms, for our pigs, for our cows, whatever, with trucks. They know through the non-Jewish people that a lot of Jews hiding on the farm. They went around with things and sticks and they found a soft spot.

Bayonets?

They look. Why.

So, were you underground?

Underground.

And did you sleep there and spend days there? Did you ever see the light of day? . . . 27 months? What did you eat?

Whatever she brought it up. If she brought it up. We have to live with it.

Were they nice?

I cannot give them a medal, but….

But they kept you alive.

Well, I have to be thankful.

So, it was you and your mother, who were the other seven, who were the other five?

My husband, when he came in the picture, my husband's sister, a girlfriend who made later that the brother that got killed and the brother who was the youngest one that got killed.

Was it a coincidence that they……

No, through our man, the one who took care of me, we contact each other and he was trying to find out because a lot of people know other non-Jewish people. What, what possible can be a Jew in hiding.

Now, so your husband was already your friend? You already knew…,

We was married in 1942.

But when you were in hiding you weren't married before you went into hiding? You were married before you went in hiding? We missed the wedding! Why don't you go back a little bit. I want the wedding.

You said you didn't want that!

No! I want the wedding.

The past and the future, so.

So, but you marry, but I thought, yeah ok. So where did you marry him?

It was not a marriage. There was my, we have our city like I told you, I have very religious family people there. And one of my uncles was still alive and he had to, he was allowed to give a wedding. He weren't really…..

[Someone walks in] Sorry

Hi!

Yeah, I want to hear everything and I did know that it could possibly take longer. We've covered a lot of things but you know there's so many, I don't know what to ask. I have the questions but you bring up something that makes me think of something and I say something and you say……

It's not, I say it's awfully complicated. Because between time, time, time unless a person writes a book and make the notations and then he goes by notations, but even myself, I don't remember a lot of things. "Cause when I start talking, it comes to me. It's just a picture placed in front of me that tells me, don't you remember this, don't you remember that.

Yes, and then you know I'm sitting here with my mouth open listening to, you know I've heard lots of stories and everybody has their own special story. Ok, so lets talk about how you and your husband got married.

We was between, it was so many, not everybody was sent away for good. People were sent but there was still an open ways to come back. We was poor couples, or were sended away working, we come back to the city. Like me and my husband, two of my friends from Krakow and boyfriend and one from Sosnowiec. We make all for a date that come back to our city because I have an uncle who can marry us. It didn't matter in those times but to me it mattered. I said whereever we lineup I want to be married. And, I got a ring from somebody, 5 zlotys, whatever the ring was and he changed it for each of us.

Ah, you traded the same ring?

Traded the same ring. We all four couples got married with the same ring. From the four couples, I survived, and one, the one from Sosnowiec, she lives in Israel, in Ramat Gan.

Ahhh. And do you still have a relationship?

Yeah, oh yes. And the other two got killed.

Now at this time, what were you doing?

We were separated. Right after maybe a week later, I go my way, he go his way. It's not something to stay together

Right, is this when you were working at the hospital? It's after the hospital?

No, no, no... it was much later.

It's after the ammunition place?

No, that was the time when we were working on railroads.

On the railroads.

Yes.

And so had you always planned that or you got scared and said we need to…

No, no. They said… [?], my husband come to me with this story, at that time. Of course, they all, nobody, he brought it from, the rest of them. And he said to me, we was in contact. He was working in a different station I was working in a different, but we could see each other. It was not yet like a ghetto in the city, but when you walk, it's, you see more, unless you don't want to obey the law and then they kill you, but that's another story. So, my husband come to me one time, one Thursday morning, I remember before even I had the soup. And he said that he understand that all the young people, that was just young people, the older ones already go, no older people. That all the young people going to be sent away to concentration camps on Sunday. That was our task. They hold us long enough because we was useful to them. We could speak German, we could [?] for the Poland what didn't understood their language. We did a lot. But they had a benefit from us. So, they hold us long enough but they was probably a order, *Judenrein*, clean up all the Jews. And that's, whoever brought this from one person to another. It's always some people behind the scene and know more. And he said he think, that was his opinion, that it would be smarter if we married and if we had to hide someplace and be together, be as a married couple. Well, he know my kind of a life. So, we contact, those four of us, contact 4:00 in the afternoon there was still a group of Jews what they was *davenin' minchah-ma'ariv* [Yiddish/Hebrew: reciting the afternoon and evening prayers]. We went down and told him we have to do it very quietly that nobody outside know that we're inside. We locked up the little *shtibl* or whatever. There were ten Jews there. The four men, my uncle five and five young boys they make the services and made us [?].

Ah. And so, then what happened after the wedding? After you got married?

It was Ok. That was just the ceremony.

Yeah, he goes home and you go home. And so then……..

It didn't mean anything to us. It's just the reason that we know we're married and whenever we line up, we line up together.

So then, now, so then you're working at the station and then you got rescued from that. The ammunition, you got rescue from that then you went home and then you went into hiding. And what's he doing? What's your husband doing at this time?

He was working at different stations. He finally, my, my man contact him. He was in contact with all our people, with people, that we…

Now who's your man… oh your man, the one who rescued you.

That we relayed to him. And if you find out somebody still around or still alive he contacted him and want to help them if he can help. My husband had a brother and his wife and two children was hiding in another place because my husband come from the textile business you keep a lot of goods to the goyim to keep it. There were several brothers, four or five brothers, there was seven kids in that family. And killed, he called police. The guy who hold the family called the police after being there maybe six, ten, twelve months, that was quite a long time in the hiding place. Call the police and say "the Jews come to rob me." The police come in and kill the brother, sister-in-law, and the two children. One was seven years old, one was three years old.

Oh my Gosh!

So not everyone who kept you in hiding saved you when you survived.

So why, why would somebody turn them in? Did they get a reward, or it was too expensive to keep them?

They were tired of them.

Tired of them.

As long as they had the money, as long as they had all of the things what they give them, you run out of everything. You take off your jewelry, you take off your necklace, you take off your clothes. How much money have you [?] doesn't want it.

So then, so shortly there after your man who was saving you help you, brought your husband and his . . . . .

Yes, you see, that man was paying to, that when he was hiding us, ten thousand zlotys a month when he was keeping us.

And how much would that be?

That would be, there's five zlotys a dollar. It would be two thousand dollars.

So, did you have contact with this man after the war?

Oh, we left, we kept in touch.

Yeah… So, so then you…

I'm still in contact with this family. He passed away. His wife is in Warsaw, his son is a [?]

Not many people like that. So, then you stayed there for 27 months? All of you, all seven of you stayed for 27 months?

Yeah. They come in later, later, later.

Well, I mean, right. so, then what happened? How did you get out?

When the Russians come in. Russian come in everywhere.

How did you find out? I guess your man would tell you that the Russians came in?

In the beginning we didn't think he tell us the truth. We were afraid he was just time for us to get out, then they can catch us. But after we heard the planes coming back and forth and the Russian language is so loud and so heavy, then you start hearing all those things.

Let's stop here and when we talk, we'll reschedule and then we'll talk about what happened from that point on. Because if Sam comes back and I think were gonna…

(End of Tape 1, Side 2)
(Beginning of Tape 2, Side 1)

From around here….

Oh, you're looking…. I didn't know from where you're looking for…

Yeah there we go…

Because to me I don't see any movement.

No, I know. That's why I try to keep my eye on it, it's a different issue.

Right, to get close or not.

Yeah. Okay.

Now I see.

I keep my eye, I'm gonna keep my eye on it.

I don't know how far we are. You want to go through the whole things and see the end or what? Do know where we are?

I know where we are.

Do you remember?

Yes, we talked, we ended up where we talked about the man that your father hired to keep you in hiding. And he came and told you . . .

Uh uh…

...No? Ok, correct me then.

My mother, my father was there.

Your father was, but who paid…he did it himself and he paid the family that kept you?

No, we left a substantial amount of money with those people. He took care on the paying all through the time. My father was not there.

Was your, so was your family's money paying for you to be in hiding? Paying that family that kept you?

Yes.

How did your father know to leave that money?

No, he left it because he...

Because you couldn't take it with you?

There was everything we left, money, gold and whatever. All of your possessions. There was nothing you could take with you if they put, throw you on a truck and take you away, what's you gonna take with you?

So, the, the your father, man that your father, that worked for your father . . . . .

A friend of ours, he didn't work for us. He was a friend of ours and we did business with him.

Okay.

He was a wealthy person; he didn't work for us.

Oh, I see, okay. But he paid the people…

He was taken care in a way. Like some money and some promises. And he told the man that he's responsible and he'd pay them ten thousand, our money a month. That was then when my husband come in the picture, and his sister and one of my brothers. Then he start paying ten thousand for us.

And what did your…

It was several months later. When I come in he give 'em a substantial amount and he was hoping that that amount and he was hoping that's amount what he's gonna cover my expenses. But when there was a crowd and he had to cook and buy groceries, he said and do more work for us, and of course he insisted payment of money monthly. And he asked me, we approve. My husband approved, I approved for him to pay him that much. We know that that's going to be enough. We didn't know if that going to be enough, but we know it's enough for a length of time.

How did you find this person, was it a family that hid you?

Non-Jewish people

But was it a family or just…

What do you mean a family?

The people that you hid in their farm. Where you hid underground?

Underground in the farm we dig out a bunker and . . .

Did you, you digged, you dug it out?

Yes.

But how did you find the people to do that? That would hide you?

He, that non-Jewish person, a gentleman that I was talking to. He found it. I didn't find it. I didn't know who he is in the first place. We depended on the friend of ours…

And you just had to trust…

In the city. And he knew that guy because they belonged to the same organization, like church, whatever. And he trusted him, but he also give him rules. He told him "those people have to survive, whatever. And if you goin' be a part of something happen to them, like have to survive is one saying, but you cannot guarantee life to nobody. But if you going to be some part of do any harm to them, or cause any harm, he said "I will see that you and your family will go." He give him a threat.

Like you had mentioned other people whose family betrayed. So, who was in that family? Did you meet that family, did you see all the people that you stayed with?

Oh yeah, the people… oh sure yeah. There was a husband and wife and two children. A little boy six years and a little girl four years. Children, really young kids.

Now do you have you had contact with them? So, they just…

The man and the woman, no. They already dead. The kids didn't know us.

They didn't know…

They didn't even know there was a bunker in there. What would you say in English this is? Where you keep the animals, you keep the horses . . . .

Like a barn?

A barn

So, when you stayed there and they had to cook for you and everything, didn't the large amount, the quantity of food, nobody noticed that because it was a farm?

She had to cook for the animals.

She cooked for the animals?

Oh sure. You didn't buy everything. They have hay, they have whatever. But most of the time she cooked potatoes. And in the potatoes they put the kind of wheat and mix this together and throw it for . . . . they have a pretty good size farm. They had several different cows and chickens and she took out a bucket of something different things, she took food.

Did you eat very well? Did you eat everyday?

It was days that the *Gestapo* was on the farm and she wouldn't even open, she wouldn't even try or he, they was just trying to be away from the farm period.

And you never came out?

We came out at nighttime.

You did?

Yeah. It was on a farm you know, there are farmers that go to that area like eight, nine o'clock, its peace. You don't see anybody anyplace. And of course we was, most of the time wait until midnight…twelve, one then we went out and tried to bathe and wash and …

They have a pond or something or water well . . . .

They have a water well and we picked up in the bucket water and brought it in the barn and wash ourselves.

So, what was the entrance to this bunker like?

It was like you see that little carpet? Covered up like the carpet . . . .

Was it like a door that came up?

No, no there was, if you make that hole, according to that hole, was like… made from like, let's say one by one. Those…

Slats?

Slats. And a long, and a way. And on the slat was hay or some other kind of things that pretend look like the rest of the farm. And only things what we was scared of it. When the Germans use to come in the first thing they took the bayonet and tried to see if the ground was soft. And naturally if they would come to that particular spot, the bayonet would go down. But there was no other way to do it because the first place we need some air. And the second place, this way we could hear what's going on upstairs because we was maybe like seven, eight feet underground.

And how far away from the house were you?

It was next to the house. The whole thing was built like one whole shack.

And again how long were you in this?

27 months

And was there ever a scare?

There was a lot of scares Ah, but there was nothing we could do with it.

But the scare would be that the Gestapo would come to the . . . .

We would hear their voices. We heard friends come in to visit the family on Sunday after church. They use to stop and have drinks and have lunches and not sure that's make a difference whoever was coming into the place was dangerous for us.

Did anybody besides your father's, this friend of your father's, your family and the people, the man on the farm, did anybody else know you were there?

No.

So, then you said before that, the friend came and told you that you were liberated. That the war was over and you didn't believe him.

That's was two days, three days after the Russians come in. That's was not in the city. They come into the city and the guy went to the city for some reason, like they usually the farmers go to the city. And they told him the Russians are in. And when he come back and told us this. We thought he wanted us to get out, get rid of us. But we watched all night long. We heard the planes. 'Cause planes go through even though it was eight-ten miles away you could hear them going. And the voices, the Russian voices. So that made us believe that he was right.

So, what happened? What was the moment that you knew it was over?

There was really, we didn't know what it's over, what it's not over, what we coming across. We just took chances. And we started little by little come out from that hole and dressed… whatever was left, because we didn't have enough clothes left after that many months. Shoes we didn't have, that was out. But there was nobody to take us to the city. We had to walk.

So, you came out of the bunker, you heard the voices and you heard the planes, so you just came out of the bunkers and start walking?

Walking

Do you know what the day was, what day it was?

It was the 18th of January.

Was it cold in the bunker?

In the bunker, no. But it was cold in the field and the city was freezing. The grounds was…

But under the grounds you were warm?

Yes. Yes, we never need any heating. No.

So, you got out and you just started walking.

We start walking and we head, it took us a few hours. The, really the cold weather was very uncomfortable. Since we didn't have shoes, we had to use from, from a horse a blanket and cut in pieces and wrap around our feet.

And how far out of the city were you?

Seven kilometer, kilometer . . . I don't know miles, probably ten miles.

So, you walked then, what happened? What did you see?

We come into the city, we look for our places where we left, our homes, and of course in some places people was living, non-Jewish people. And they wouldn't even let us in, not that we was afraid of it. We was not afraid because we thought the Russians gonna be on our side. So, whenever we went in we felt, now it's our time. But they didn't let us in. For example, in our house, the man was working with the post office, and he said he had nothing to with it. House, or with all the furnishing or whatever it was assigned to him by the post office. If we want a possession to go to the magistrate to the *Gemeinde* [German: municipal authority], whatever and ask for possession.

You mean like a job?

No. Like to get back.

Oh, Ok . . . to get your house back.

So, we went to different area where my husband's family had business. It was like the Plaza area, where all the fronts was stores and the backs was living quarters. We find an open house where nobody lived in it, and we settled in that house. Til we got acquaint with some Russian people that was Russian soldier, a Jew. Somehow, he didn't want to admit he's Jewish. But, when we talked to him, we told him when we got back we Jewish, there is another family just coming a day later, another Jewish family just come back from a different part of the country and that we need someplace to move where we have furniture, where we have some cooking facilities, so far. And he find a larger place for us and we all moved in, like 13 or 14 people. And that, everybody took a little quarter for something.

When you got there, to your town, and you found this place to stay, were the Russians there?

Yeah

So, there were soldiers walking the streets . . .and you just talked to them?

Yes, yes they was on the Plaza. Most of the Russians were settled in that part of the Plaza because it was . . . .

They were living there?

Yeah, of course. They have to have quarters. They took over schools, they took over . . . they have to have some, for even for them and for the families little by little that settled there, for a while. And they were pretty nice to us. I cannot they helped us too much but they brought us some food, they told us if we need transportation they will take us, we need to go to a different city. I didn't stay there very long. I'm, I'm stay there short while

because I know the part of the country very well because I was a student and I was traveling a lot. So, I went to Krakow.

You and your husband?

Myself . . . A man didn't have anything to offer. Was afraid to get out from the house. Of course, was still not so…

Not so secure.

Secure, and there was a lot of Germans hiding, there was a lot of AK [abbreviation for *Armia Krajowa*} the Polish people was that trying to get rid of the Jews. So actually, a man really not too many men you could see in any place. But I took some food with me when I where I followed. Of course, my husband had a lot of goods and they want to tax our business. Before they left, they put some stuff into our, a guy, he was a, one was a druggist, very fine people. Fine family, rich people, and to the *burgermeister*. You know what's a *burgermeister*?

A mayor or something?

A mayor. His wife was a teacher and she use to be client of them. He use to buy, use to buy all the goods from them. So, we left quite a number of materials with both of those families. We went, they don't give us back everything, not even 20%, but some. Whatever they give us back was more than nothing. So, when we got some things, we start giving this to the farmers and the farmers give us food.

To trade

'Cause they need material, they need clothing, they need something. Especially so many years we went through. I took with me some butter, some flour, and something in the meat line. It was kielbasas or something…

In a backpack?

In a backpack. And I went to Krakow.

What were you going to do there? What did you plan to do.

Sell it

Oh, to sell it, oh I see. Start all over . . . .

Everybody was hungry. Everybody need food, especially the bigger the city the less food they have. I know quite a few people, I didn't find too many what I know, but still I had something to offer. And I sold this, not for money, I exchange it for matches, for salt, for cigarettes. So, my bag was full of the other stuff when I come back. And I had this, I could

buy for this a lot, a lot of food. And from one to another we start buying, exchange and it took me like six weeks, back and forth. And I make a little money and I moved. I didn't want to stay in that city any more. The first place I was afraid, it's a smaller city and I, we originated from there, nobody want to give us back what our belonging, and nobody want to give us back our homes, they're trying to get rid of us. I know it's danger to be there.

Were you ever threatened?

Oh yes, yes a lot of time.

By people you knew?

By a very good friend of mine. And she was one from the high society woman. She lived in Warsaw, but her sister was *burgermeister's* daughter and she came to our city and stayed all through the war. And we were very close friends, me and her were almost like sisters. And when I went to her, I left her all my clothes. My personal fur coat and boots and dresses and jewelry and I went to her, she said "are you still alive? How come everybody, they kill everybody and you here?"

Oh my gosh.

She was just 20 something years old, a young, young you know. And I said everything I need from you is shoes, because I will help myself with some other clothes, I'm going to Krakow. But without shoes I can go no place and nobody can wear my shoes. I have such a small foot. She says, "I have nothing of yours." The police come in took everything out. They recognize your clothes, they know you. I was very well dressed, and city was small, they know me. And we didn't have too many Jewish students, and I was one in that city in those years. So, it's true, they didn't took everything out, you know this, and we know this. Anyway, the way she treated me, I said that's the end of her. I have no reason to stay here. And that time, something come to my mind. I said I'm going temporary to Sosnowiec , that's a close city to the German border. And then I said from there, I will see where I can migrate to a different country. Simple go away from that country. In Germany was easier, even the Germans were not good to me but I lived there and I know it well that part and normally the Germans was a nicer class of people then the Polish. Just so happened we have Hitler. Like you know if the government is no good, the rest of the world is follow.

You're German? You consider yourself German?

Yeah, ah yeah . I could speak German, I didn't have any problem. So, six weeks later I moved. I move to Sosnowiec and I have a little money already . . . .

Are you alone?

Me and my husband

You and your husband. So, your husband got to go with you this time?

I was married. I was married in '42 and I bought a grocery store. Ah, pardon me. I bought an empty store. I didn't bought anything. My uncle lived in Sosnowiec and nobody survived from that family. And I went to the *burgermeister* in Sosnowiec and I told him my name and I told him my uncle's name and I said I'm a niece. My name is Braun, and he was Braun, Moyshe, and I give him the whole description, and I said he have a store right here on [inaudible street name 3?] and it was a furniture store. And he looked in some records and said yes. So, he let me have that store. It was an empty store and I start a grocery store. But not groceries like we have here. If you hear groceries, you think it's groceries. We bought everything in bulk. A hundred pound of flour, a hundred pound of rice, a hundred pound of whatever. Whatever is everything in bulks. Butter was coming in cases, eggs was coming in cases.

Now you started off real small so you could buy bigger and bigger . . . .

Yes, I went to the station on [?] street, [?] is the street where my store was. Across the street was *Trzecie Omaj*, the Third of May Street. There was the station, the union station and the train was coming every morning with all those goodies from around the farms and I bought from them, load up my store and start from scratch. And then when I had more money, I went back to that small city where I originated and bought in truckloads. And I was doing pretty good, but that was not my future. I, and my mother and my brother and his wife, he just married for we left a month later he married. What when I say his wife, she was with us in hiding. And after we got liberated, he felt this is his duty to marry. That was our custom. So, he married to her. I left the end of February, he married to her by the middle of March. I wouldn't know exactly the date. And they were still staying in that city because he was doing what I was doing but he, himself went to big cities to buy in a bigger format, and he was young. He was younger than I, younger. He bought bicycles, sewing machines, bigger equipment. Things what the farmers will give you everything for it. Naturally he was doing pretty good and had lot a and lot a of money. Knowing to make in that time, you don't have to be a genius. Everybody could make money. You wanted to do the job, but I was very uncomfortable for my mother to still be in that city. So, when he was in Sosnowiec I said to him I have here, where I lived, in a house. I have a beautiful apartment, across the street is one available. If you want it, I rent you the apartment, you bring mother and your wife and you settle here. We all be together again. You can do the same things from here what you do from there." He said, "Deal. I take that truck load home, sell it out and next week we all coming." So, I went and rent the apartment … and he never come back. The same night when he arrived 11:00, 12:00, midnight, the AK killed him. That was the first of May, I don't know, you in the States know that things in Europe, the 1st of May had to do something the traditional you paintings against the Russians, or the Russians against Poland, it's like the 3rd of May, Poland celebrate. The 1st of May, Russians celebrate. And the AK was Polish and they was trying to find a Russian or a Jew. It was like a revolution, simple as that. And a lot of Jews were killed in that particular day in Kielce and my brother was one. So, after this I registered immediately, we went to the HIAS [Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society], and we asked of any quotas available. Of course, papers will say in the immigrant, the survivors were immigrant, there was no Israel yet. It was still '45. But there is an opening for so many quotas, so many Jews to that country or that country. You know there was a lot of going

on and we registered for United States or Israel, if ever possible. Of course, it took us five years.

Really?

Yeah, there's a quota and so many can come. And again, kids have more privileges than the married one. And the worse young kids like 18, 19, 17, like they send them to Italy and from Italy they send them to America, or Canada or places like this. We was like later, later on. . . for example, if you know Federman…

Uh huh…

There was single people. He was single, I was single. And his brother was single. And a whole family from the Federmans, came Mandelbaum. He was single and young. They came '47, '48 something like this. They had more privileges than we. So, in 19… of course we operated the business in the store.

But your mom came to live with you?

Yeah,

What about your brother's wife?

She brought her. She brought her and stayed. We all four lived in my apartment, I have a big apartment ... And what can I tell you. I operated the business and we did very well.

Did you experience antisemitism in this business

Yes, I make enough money to go further.

To do what?

To go a little farther, not to be in Poland. And we, I couldn't take my mother with me. Me and my husband packed up everything. Of course, after my brother was killed . . . I know that I missed so many things in between that I start talking constantly.

That's fine.

That guy that gentleman, gentleman what he took us, not what he kept us, but what he find this place for us, he came to Sosnowiec and he came into my store and he said " I want you all to leave the country." There is rumors in the city, in that city, there is one left from the whole group, is your husband. And they're after him.

What do you mean one left?

Fred, my husband, from the whole hiding group where we survived. My two brothers were already killed . . . .

Oh, you mean men?

Men

And they want him dead.

That's right. So, we didn't think twice. That was the end of the story. Give the store to a family what we know in a different city, and I told them that if you ever make good on that, send us money. We'll let you know where we settle. And if not, good luck to you! Whatever I had to give, few of our family come in from that city. That city didn't cause the concentration camp was liberated late. We come in January, they come in, in May. So, when they come from the camps, everybody was poor without clothes and I already have money, I already have clothes so whoever find out that we in Sosnowiec from our city, they come to us. We helped them as much as we could. And the week from Rosh Hashanah we pack and we went. We don't know where we go. You know where I went back? Krakow. To find my friends what I know from before the war. See how everybody survived. To find somebody, I was still a child, you know. Still in that age in the 20s. How much you know! Somebody, an older person, maybe be some advisor to me or help me. And I find guy, he was a, a lawyer before the war. And he lived at 17 miles away from Krakow. But he practiced, he have a practice office in Krakow. I found him. He and his son survived, come back. The son is still in Israel, in Jerusalem. And I told him, I said, his name was Knoble [possible surname], and I says to him, I says you know my father so well, you know my mother so well. My mother is around but I couldn't drag her with me 'cause I don't know where I'm going. What should we do? We had to go back to Germany. How? Give us help. He said "don't worry about it. I have money, I have a lot of money. So, we all go." He called his son and a few other people from Krakow, he hired a truck, a Russian truck, to take us to the border, to the Czech border, not to the German. When we get to the Czech, to near Prague, we can walk over to the German side. The German side was more occupied by the Russians. And he was afraid that Russian, that truck what he hired the Russian, he was afraid that they catch him, they kill him. So, he said he gonna take us to the near Prague and then we have to go through a forest, we come out on the other side, we be in Germany.

Now, so you, you were in Poland?

Krakow. From Krakow to Prague is not too far.

But I mean – where you were living? Your grocery store was in Germany?

No. Was in Sosnowiec. It's also on the border, another border. It's see, let's say, this is Germany and this is Poland. Czechoslovakia is right underneath.

So, you were wanting to go back into Germany and do what? Once you got to Germany?

We don't have plans.

What about your Mom?

We felt my Mom in my apartment and we left my mom. My Mom was not old in those years in the 40. She could manage herself too and my sister, my brother's wife with her. And I said wherever we relocated, I come back and pick her up. We didn't have a chance, all of us, to go on the same time. Because we didn't know where we were going to wind up. We come to the border, they dropped us off, because 17 people. We two and he got a whole group for… and I paid for everyone. I had money and they didn't. So, I buy my life for money. We come in the middle of the night, and he advised us, the Russian soldier, how to walk through the forest and if we go right, we should be around 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning on the other side.

You did this how, how much, how much longer would you have had to wait for [HAIS] to help?

Who knows? There was no day, nobody tell you anything. They just tell you simple. Register – when the time comes we let you know. Do you think anybody cared about anybody. If people tell you, they're not telling you the truth? The fact is we come in. It's 6:00, daylight and we're dirty, in the forest all night having those backs on the things. And me silly I was wearing a fur coat. It was wintertime. No pardon me, it was before the High Holidays, something before Rosh Hashanah, but I didn't want to give up the fur coat. I said wherever I go if I have to cover myself or whatever, I need that coat. We walk over that forest and look around and see a city street, a city quiet, nobody on it. Where we going? We go, we walking and everybody's walking, and come near we see a restaurant, say a coffee shop in *Tshekhish* [Yiddish: Czechoslovakian] We open the door, everybody dirty, filthy and we say can we get something to drink, coffee, tea, milk, whatever. Money we had. But they say they don't take money. We have to have, like they have stamps here, like here for groceries, they give to give to the poor people. They were not allowed to exchange anything for money. If you're poor, you have to go to get this. Even if you're rich, you have to buy this.

Like scrips.

Yes. We don't have any stamps. They call it [unknown Polish or Czechoslovakian word] here what they have. We don't have any stamps. Guy sitting by the counter and he said "What do you want" and we said we wanted coffee. "How many you are?" We was afraid to say 17. So we said seven and he said to give them coffee and he took out a full booklet and cut off his stamps. Then a few minutes later another five come in. Before you know it, the restaurant is full of people and he asked us who you are, what you are, what you want to do. We explained to him we were walking to make the border, unlegal [*sic*], we had no passports whatsoever, no documents. We didn't have anything. We didn't have any.

That's why you had to go through the forest because you didn't have any papers.

No, we didn't want to have any papers. If we have papers, they put us in jail.

Yes. Take you Jews we missed you during the war. Got you now.

So, he said you need to wash yourself up before you do anything and change clothes. He took us home, all of us, and give us a basement with bathtubs, with everything. He said, "You go down and take off your clothes, wash, wash your clothes and I give you temporary clothes to wear, give everybody a robe or something." And we washed out our clothes. It was filthy. We traveled maybe 3, 4 days before we got to the border. And we changed clothes and he told us, "so far you have to a train." And we walked to that train. All got on the train and we go. "Where you going?"

You don't know.

Traveled from Czechoslovakia. We went and we walked a little bit in the city and then we come to the train, bought tickets. We went on the train to Austria, and they told us on the train we find other Jews and they told us that Austria is like here is the Federation, but they call it something different…

The Joint?

Joint Distribution [American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee], something like that, different language. And they give us some instruction where to go and what to do if we come to that city. And we stopped in that city. We went to that organization and we said really we have no plans, but we want to settle some place. They said okay. Here's food. They brought us in, took us [big hall?] give us food and two days later I think was the holidays. And they give us food, they give us… everybody has place to sleep on the floor, like not a mattress, but a sack with whatever. You can sleep there until you find some kind of other help. So, my husband find a friend from Sosnowiec. He was there. Then we find a friend from Lodz, from Poland and they were doing textiles. Those people had factories. We find 2, 3 people that were there already a week or two in the place. They say where we go. Let's all go on a trip. Money is no object. If I have the money and they don't have it, who cares about the money as long as we can go. We all took a train again, went from there, start traveling. The first city was Regensburg, Germany. We stopped in Regensburg. We unloaded everything, go again to the Jewish Federation like I'm gonna say. And there was a little more organized.

Now are you travelling because you can, you can afford to and you're looking for somebody to say we'll send you somewhere, because they could just give you a place to sleep and that's all.

That's all. But I was looking for some place to give us a solution, what to do with yourself. We come into big hall and there was a Rabbi there, Rabbi Glatzer. We tell him, told him the whole story and he said "Children, nothing to worry. See across the street this is a Jewish restaurant, kosher food. I established it. I have two Jews from City A, whatever. They took over and any time you need food, you go there eat, and you don't have to pay."

And this is in Germany?

In Germany. We were there for 3 or 4 days in that hall and finally, they come back to us. We were trying to interview people A, people B. He come back, Dr. Glatzer and he said "I have a place for you. How many people are you?" I say, right now we four because we separated, like a single man look for another place and like couples? We was left like four. He said "I have a place for two" and we have to go, too. So, he took us. Other two was too gentle. We two was a couple, give us a place to stay. We moved in, a very nice place, furnished, linens, with everything.

This was like an apartment?

Yes.

You were living alone, not with a family?

No. And we stayed there in that place for a week or so, start knowing the city better. My husband was gone every morning to the Union Station to find out if more Jews come in.

Now you said that your husband saw at the other place, that they, that he saw somebody he knew from your town?

Yes. We all got together, and He… Rabbi…

(End of Tape 2, Side 1)
(Beginning of Tape 2, Side 2)

When you…Okay. The places you were at. The places you just stayed for a night and are you seeing people like you who are in hiding, people who were from the camps?

All kind of people, from different countries. Not necessarily people that from France, it was from Italy.

Just wandering, trying to find a place.

Trying to find a place and the time when we got there, there was maybe 25 Jews and in three months later we was 100. They come back from different type. Nobody knew where to settle. Wherever they discover, if you find somebody and discover oh, there's a group of Jews there, and everybody goes there.

Did you run into many people that you knew from?

Very few, very few. My husband went to this Union Station and tried to find, was hoping to find somebody former relatives, somebody, whatever. But he come across whoever he come across and he said you can come in and stay with us, because we have a good size apartment, a beautiful apartment, furnished with everything. And he brought in a lady, not an old lady. Now wait a minute, wait a minute, too far. I went home. After 6 weeks, I went back to Sosnowiec to pick up my mother.

Because you were settled.

Rabbi Glatzer put me together with an American soldier because this was the American zone where we was.

American what?

Zone.

Zone**.**

Because they took over that part of Germany and my mother was in the Russian zone. Rabbi Glatzer connect me with the soldier, American soldier, and he give me permission to go back to Poland, back to pick, legally to pick up my mother. I lived here and discovered with my mother is alive and I have right American [authorization?] with his picture and my picture. Full, like a album, so nobody asked me, or do any harm. I went back home, picked up my mother. We legally came back to Regensburg.

Did you bring your sister-in-law?

No. She found a brother and she didn't want to go. She's in Israel. She is in Ramat Gan. She might have plan, I don't know. She might be here [?]. I brought my mother back and then what I'm saying, in time when I was on my way home, I stayed a month in Sosnowiec just because we still had a lot of merchandise in my house to sell off. I was liquidate everything. We packed and we don't come back. When I come back, my house was so full I have maybe 10 people living in my house.

Your husband took everybody in.

Whoever he could find. That's what I was saying, there was another woman, an older, like my mother, maybe 50 or 55 years old, And two sons. She come in with two sons. Another couple, another single, whoever he can. And I come in and say Fred, where we gonna sleep? He said, "don't worry about it." I said don't worry about it? I have my mother with me. Now we need two rooms for ourselves and you occupy every room itself. He start looking at, he was already in city, looking on how to locate everybody. But he left the older woman and the two sons with us. Why? Because he said my mother is going to need some companionship. We didn't have anybody. He said, "She's a nice woman and she know how to cook and keep house and take care of us." Okay. It took us awhile and I got pregnant with Sam. He was born. So, everybody had to relocate with Sam. And I stayed in Regensburg for five years. 1945 to 1950.

So, were you not still trying to find a way to another country?

No. And I had the baby and we had to stay.

What did you do for a living?

What we do? We opened another textile, like we had in… his field, not like the grocery. I found an empty store, used to be a hat store. And it was not occupied. The hats were sitting in the window and deteriorating, probably from the water and everything else. And I went again to the *burgermeister*, ask, oh we could rent this and he, after awhile, let me rent that place. Was not so easy, but I took in a partner. Somebody where we found a friend, a German from Berlin, and he was also in the textile business. So we went in partnership, he and his wife. She was from Prague and he was from Berlin and both of us miss speaking good English… I mean German, she was speaking English, the wife is. And we had a lot of soldiers in the city, American. So, we opened, I opened the store and we start to go and traveling again with that kind of business, like taking food to the factories and bringing material back and forth, one to another. Germany was different. They didn't eat that type of food. They ate coffee, cocoa, chocolate, wurst, that kind of stuff. But we find, you know, Jews… always…

Resourceful.

And we opened that business and we did fabulous. We did very good. And then we left five years later… five years, four years, whatever they give us, they give us a signal that we can immigrate. If you want. You didn't, was not forced to do it. You can do it or you don't have to do it.

Before you go on, the kind of people you dealt with when you were in business? Were they receptive to you?

Who, the Germans?

The Germans, the whoever you dealt with? They have to be very few Jews in business in Germany at that time.

They was kissing us to sell them a little merchandise.

'Cause they want what you had.

They was so restricted, there was a black market. If you want to go on the black market to buy anything, you have to pay ten times as much. We had a legal business, by the government and we sold those stamps, not or money. Everything was for stamps. And for those stamps we got then, from the government good money.

Did you experience a lot of antisemitism? And they want to deal with you but did …

Frankly Germany was less than Poland, after the war. And I tell you my experiences, they were afraid. They were afraid. They were very depressed at the situation knowing that they lost and knowing they don't know who is coming back alive and if they come alive or

somebody will kill them because he'll recognize and he was a Gestapo or you was in the camp as the main man that killed or dead or whatever. So, they really was not so…

So, what was your, what was your mental state? You went, you went, you obviously felt "I'm going to survive this." I can imagine what it would be like coming out of hiding for 27 months.

I know, I know, when I remember the past or think for the future, today is today, tomorrow is another.

You had incentive to do . . . . .

Our life was not with any experience to know what we doing. We did. Whatever will happen, happen. We went through so much from, take our kids from high school and send them to a mission like this, what do you expect them not want to do.

Were you depressed?

Frankly I was not depressed, but I was sick. I went through a lot when I was in the bunker with…

Physically sick?

Yeah, oh yes.

But mentally you were strong?

Yeah.

And your husband as well?

My mind was… My husband was Ok. He had no problems health wise, he had no problem any other wise. But I was physically sick. And I was too soon for me to have a child. I didn't develop myself yet.

You weren't eating right for years?

We didn't eat anything for years, we live like just to exist.

So, did that take a big toll on your body and your mental state?

Yes, yes, yes. That was the main thing that was against me, otherwise I had no problem to do anything I want to do.

So, you weren't planning to get pregnant?

No. I didn't . . . we didn't. So, it was just unfortunately happen, you know, it happen.

That year they came into . . . In ‘46 did they say . . . no they said in ‘50 you said.

’49, we had a visa. But we had to make a decision. If we wanna, we had a business, we have a place, we have an apartment, we have furniture, everything. What you want to do? I was organized already. I have nice things, you know. Germany was not difficult to get crystal and glass, and gold and diamonds and everything you could get for just a piece for [?] you could get a diamond. This was after the war, it was the… you see it’s awfully difficult to speak to an American that he will really understand the talking. The first place the American people never had a war in the country. They were doing all kind through history, but in the country, a shortage of food a shortage, there’d be a shortage… yes, we had a depression, but this is, that was zero in comparison to the kind of life. So, even what we say and how we say, it doesn’t register in anybody’s mind the way it is, in the reality. But again, that’s, that’s the way it happened, you can’t help it. You have to go on and on. And of course, in ’49 when we received the visa, we didn’t think twice. We want to go right away, right away. Didn’t know where we going. I went to the library, that… I, we was when we were assigned to Kansas City.

They didn’t give you a choice, they said here’s your visa, you’re going to Kansas City.

Oh no! You were assigned to a city. Whatever the city is, it could be in Pittsburg, could be . . . . I went to the library, and I looked over other books, history of cities. And I see New York. It was the big city, suppose to be this, and manufacturing and business, industrial and this. I said, “what is next?” With Chicago, again, poo, poo, poo. Ok, come to Kansas City. It’s hilly, it’s windy and it’s a lot of farmers. And it’s a meat area.

A meat park packing, right.

Wow! I said, “Why do we have to go there?” Why can’t we get . . . I was thinking of New York just because of all this what I . . . My mind was always set on some type of business. And I ask questions. I go to the [inaudible word followed by *Kaserne*; German word referring to military barracks or headquarters] and there was a General over there who was in charge of it, an American, and he said it’s not under their control. There is the first Jews that could settle in those big cities and too many settle. And now they have to eliminate, that they spread them around the country, regardless if it’s a Jewish city or not. And that time, when I checked it, there was 17,000 Jews in Kansas City. And I think now we have 18 or 20.

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OK, so you can imagine 50 years later, what a big Jewish city this is.

Now did they say . . you said they told you, you were coming to Kansas City. You said . . .did you say you wanted to come to America or did you say United States or Palestine and they chose the United States for you?

No, they didn't chose it. I assigned. We didn't have a Palestine, we didn't have a Israel. We have a Palestine. Palestine, they didn't have any control over those other English.

Did they not send anybody . . . So, your choices were the United States or . . . .

Whoever later went to Israel.

And what about . . . . .

Because in '48 when Israel was declared Israel, then the people what registered those years had a easy track to go.

Could you have gone to England or any other country?

There was no opening no place.

Just the United States? Did you know people who were already in the United States?

Yes, my husband had an uncle in Brooklyn and we contacted him and he was waiting for us. He couldn't sign up for us…

Sponsor you.

He was too old, age-wise. I don't know how wealthy he was or whatever, but age-wise he couldn't sign up for us. So, we had to go through the, through the . . . .

The agency?

No, what do you call them, we didn't call them Federation . .

It wasn't the joint . . .

UJA [United Jewish Appeal]

. . .UJA, I was trying to think of it too.

That's what I come back as.

Did you know people who'd already . . .I know the uncle . . .but did you know people who were already in the United States?

Yes

So, people got, they were allowed to come earlier or . . . how did that happen.

No, no I know, we just know. We didn't know exactly where he is or what he is, we just know, from Europe he escape. He went to exhibition in New York in 1939 and never come back. And the fact is they took away his visa right after the war start in Europe and he couldn't travel. But we know he's there.

But I mean other people from your…other Jewish people…you don't know where anybody was

No, we don't have any relatives except that uncle and he was an old, old man. And of course we had to, I really don't recall how long it took us from the visa to us, but I know we left February '50.

And how did you go?

We arrive. We left Hamburg, from Hamburg we went to New York. From New York we went to New Orleans. From New Orleans we come on the train.

Now did you. . . you took the boat, you went by boat?

Oh sure. It was 20 some hundred people on that boat.

What kind of a boat was it?

Was an Army boat. It was a General Black or something like that.

But it wasn't like, you know you see the immigrants coming over, was it steerage, in bad condition?

Terrible, terrible, terrible.

It was terrible. Were there any good conditions on that boat or was it all just . . . .

Frankly, I tell you the truth, I was sick all the time. We was on the boat twelve days through to New York. And from New York we stayed overnight and we went to New Orleans to [?] six days.

How did you get . . . .by boat?

By boat, by boat

And was that also another army boat?

Yes

And very bad accommodations?

Very bad accommodations. People were sick on the boat, people were throwing up. There was, I cannot even describe it what conditions the whole thing was.

Did you know anybody on the boat?

No

Was it, were there American, I want to say stewards and things like that, but the people who ran the boat were Americans? Did that place have restaurants, places to eat?

There was, there must be because. . . .no, no was not places to eat but must be some kitchens, because my husband volunteered to cook. A few other men, young men because people get sick on the boat and very sick, seasick, or whatever, and they need help. So, whoever was strong enough was volunteering to cook. They went in the kitchen, then they brought us food to the cabins.

Oh, I see

And, like my husband was in the cook, he brought enough food…

Good food?

Good food but I was sick. I was sick all the time, I was just throwing up…a little water I took a drink.

So how did Sam do on this trip?

Sam was sick with the measles.

Oh no. . .

If you want all the bad things, I give you all the bad things. Sam was, my mother was the only one. My mother and my husband was okay.

Well so how did he. . . . .Was there medical attention for him?

No. No. He didn't need it, he felt fine.

Speaking of medical attention, when you said you know when you were making your, your, right after the war you were liberated and you were going from here to there and you said that you were sick. What kind? You were physically sick?

Ah yes, I had lot of problems.

And did you get medical help?

Yes,

Did you get medical help once you settled somewhere, like in Germany?

Of course, of course

Now, was the doctor a German, would he check you?

German, German. . .we didn't have that in Jewish

Right, and he would help you, there was no problem?

Yes, oh yes, yes. Matter of fact, that was a fine doctor. He helped my mother. My mother had heart problem and he really helped her. No, that's, I can really say there was very helpful.

So, would you say that . . .

I was in the hospital when I was born and Sammy was born I was in the hospital they was treating me like royalty.

So, if you talk about the people, not the powers, not the armies, but the people. . . The Poles were bad people, were mean bad people but the Germans were decent people.

Right, true. In my case. You see people that was in camps, they will tell you different. In my case I have nothing to say bad about the Germans. I didn't, the only short time they were shoveling me back and forth I was working on the streets, railroads and stuff like this, that was still not as bad as the Poles.

Why do you think, why do you think the Polish people were so hateful?

They was not. It was not a matter because we Jewish, it was a matter they were rebels.

They're what?

Rebels like just did for to get you goods to get you money to get you valuables to get you assets for that. . . that's what I'm . . . . .

But didn't you say that they. . .but you said . . . .

I don't think the government, I think just the people. . .

Just the people…

Just the opposite, the opposite. Here was the people over there was the government. This is wrong and this is wrong…two wrongs don't make one right.

Right, right, right…OK were on the boat. You went from New York, and you spent the night in New York, then you spent the night?

On the boat, they didn't let us out.

And then you went to New Orleans. . . .

Yes

So, why did you have to go to New Orleans… Ellis…?

Because to come into Kansas City was somehow….somehow, I don't know.

So, what did you see, what happened, what's New Orleans like, where did you go?

New Orleans, they took Sammy off the, my son off the boat because he had the measles and they was had to check him out before that we can go any further or he is danger health-wise or whatever. Took him to a hospital, I ran and asked, and I ran and I went with them and they kept him over there for a couple of days. And after he was well enough, we took a train and we came to Kansas City by train.

Were there, there were other people coming to Kansas City?

Another man, a single man.

Is he still here?

No. I think he passed away a long time ago. Somebody was waiting for that man. And that was Sanders. If you ever heard of somebody with the name Sanders the tailor.

Yeah!

One just passed away recently.

Sylvia Agard… Sylvia Agard, her father.

Srulik Sanders. He was at the Union Station waiting for that gentleman.

He didn't just pass away.

No, his brother passed away. His younger brother. The youngest one. There was ah, Srulik, there was a David and I don't know the others name. Anyway, he was wait [*sic*] for that man. And for us, Mrs. Shapiro was waiting, from the Jewish Federation. And she took us in her car and took us to an apartment at 710 Virginia. And of course, it was furnished, it was enough to be able to live. There was dishes, there was linens, little bath

for Sammy, he was three and a half years old. It was a two bedroom because my mother need her own.

Now was this as nice an apartment as anything you lived in, in Germany?

No. Mrs. [Borno?] was our landlady, was $55 a month. I remember that like yesterday. And we lived in the apartment, ah about three four months soon enough. Of course I had money, I didn't need the Federation to support us. And we moved out and rented an apartment some place else.

Where did you move to?

We moved on six something 33rd Street, not far from a bakery some place. In a house.

Bronia's?... Bronia's bakery? Tastee Bakery or something.

There was a bakery there, no, not Bronia. Ah wait a minute, I tell you the name, I remember. There was a Jewish couple, older people, she was from England, the lady.

My father had a grocery store at 31st and Troost, near 31st and Troost. And around the corner there was a bakery.

No, no this was in the middle of the block on 33rd street going direction, ah how can I say from Linwood that direction, something like this. But we didn't stay there very long either. We moved there, then we bought a house, on Troost, not far from there, on 44th and Troost.

Were you working at this time.

No, like I say we had a business, and I had money.

So how much time…

Matter of fact I have tickets to fly from Munich to New York. I bought tickets. I spent $600.00 in Munich and the HIAS didn't let me do this.

They wouldn't let you fly.

Do on my own.

Did you speak any English?

Yeah.

Did you learn English from school or from the lady you were in business with?

No, from the lady. We didn't have any English classes in my time. But not enough English. To a point you know, not enough to go on a conversation. Just…….

Understand a little bit?

Where I am…?

So how, so how…You came here in, what month did you come.

We came here February 28

Okay, and so how long were you here. .

And from Pesach, I already moved.

Oh, ok, three months.

To that, to that place. And I stayed in that place 'til Karen was born. Karen was born in '51. And the minute Karen was born, we went out to look for a house.

OK, so this whole time you're still not working, or your husband not working.

Yeah, my husband was working. He was working, first job his was a grocery store, stocking groceries. And they paid him $18.

And who did he work for? Was it a Jewish bakery?

A Jewish grocery on Troost. I think his name was Fishman or something like this. Fish… something like this. And he worked a short time, and then the Jewish organization find him a job. On 12th Street, in a building was working a survivor, mechanical like, was fixing… like maintenance, and he need a helper. My husband didn't have a profession, because we was already business. His family was always business, my family was always… So he went there as a helper, and they start paying him [?], they start paying him like $25, $30 a week. Something more reasonable. And he worked there for a while, and of course we know this is not goin' be our future. We have to go in business. So, we bought a market on 15th Street, near Sears and Roebuck, was on an open field, a market with a [?] and groceries, and a food market. Something like this. We bought this, stayed there a short time, it was open 24 hours. Had to get rid of it. Then we went on 31st and Garfield, we bought a grocery store. We lost that too. We lost it because there was a credit. All the neighborhood was taking credit. All week long they was buying groceries for credit. And Friday they was supposed to bring the check. Instead of paying us with the… with the check, whatever, they want to cash the supermarket. They bought all the necessary groceries for the check. Left them a little bit for milk, for bread, for bologna, pound and stuff like this. So, we lost this. We paid for that store $18,000. And we had to close in a year time. Couldn't make it, and we didn't know too much about groceries in the state. No language… No anything.

Right.

So, we went to another grocery store on Van Brunt, 31st and Van Brunt. And we start doing pretty good then on Van Brunt. And after being there a couple of years, the landlord come in, and he was… You know the names… How could I remember names from the old country, but I don't remember [for years?]. He had those laundries, the locks, all those laundries in Kansas City in those years. I can see in front of me a heavy person… Anyway, he come one day, and he says, "I'm sorry I have bad news for you." What's the bad news, what's the good news? "I'm gonna need that building, I'm gonna' open here another department…" like he had all over the city, laundry… like cleaning places. Like the deluxe now you have… all over the city there was stores like this. And he was the plan, he was the man on the plan. And, we says, "What are we gonna do with our equipment, with the groceries?" He said, "I can give you another place." Where? He took us to Independence, to a warehouse. We said, "Who's gonna' come in here, nobody lives here. I see just storage and whatever…" He said, "That's the best I can do for you." He give us 30 days notice to move. I went to his lawyer, I tried to, the *goyishe* said "You don't have a lease." The lawyer taught "You don't stay here anyplace in business without a lease." How did know to have a lease…

Right.

What else they want me to know? Anyway, we had to liquidate this too. We opened with a non-Jewish person. When we met him, he was in the meat business, he delivered meat to the store for us, and he opened a restaurant on the airport. Not he opened… there was a restaurant there, but he bought the restaurant, and he was looking for a partner, money. So, we were in partnership with him to that restaurant. And for all good things, my husband what me to come in on Saturday and Sunday to be at the cash register. I said no, it's not gonna' work even. We was making a living, not big deal. I said the first place, Saturday I did enough. I went to the grocery store on Saturday. Saturday's not my day to work, and now your gonna' put me in the restaurant business with Saturday? No! Aright, he heard me. I said no, but I went. So I decided there is more in that country. I see people dress, people… I'm goin' to look for something else. So I went in to… you know Saks Fifth Avenue [Note: The speaker is really referring to Swanson's, which had closed a few years before], on the Plaza, we had a store, just closed recently… I used to buy clothes in the best store in the city… I can't remember the name. Where they have now the cheese-factory… the cheese restaurant [The Cheesecake Factory restaurant]

Oh, yah, [?] brother was [?] … I don't know

Oh my, it doesn't come to me. Anyway it was the finest clothes in town, not Woolf Brothers, not Helzberg. I remember them, I don't remember. Okay, what's the difference, It was a store. And there was, I went in without seeing a ad and applied for a job.

This is gonna make me crazy because I'm not gonna be able to think of this store… Okay go ahead.

If I can not… I walked there. I went in, asked for a job. They say what can you do? I said, I'm a sales lady. I have… we have a store on Holmes, I know how to sell, how to… I even know how to fit. You know how to fit? A lady put in a dress, a coat something, if you need to… alteration I told, I know how to fit on a lady says "Okay." I appealed to them because I come in dressed up like a million dollars. In a fur coat, the white hat, it was the winter time. My son said to my husband, Daddy, mother is goin' early… because Fred went early to work to the restaurant business, you know you had to be early…Whenever they dressed up, she must go to the doctor." We both understood him… okay! She's dressed up in gloves and her hat, she must go to the doctor.

We used to, we used to dress up to go to the doctor.

In those, you never went out unless you got dressed up.

Well now, before you continue, who took care of the children?

My mother.

Oh, that's right you lived with your mother.

I lived with mother…

And you didn't experience… when you came here and you opened your stores, did you experience any antisemitism? How did people accept you.

They know, how could they accept me? [Laughter]

So, were you… were there many immigrants here? Many survivors here?

Oh yes, when I came, you already had here hundreds of people because they have an organization, and a Joint…

That's who all your friends were…

Oh, we had parties like every Saturday night… Get together. [?] was a good, pretty good size crowd of Jewish people.

And did you have…

Nothing, I… I not… none of those people I know. I met them here.

Right, right. What about the other Jewish community. The Jewish community that were not survivors? Were you a part of that Jewish community? Did they accept you? Did they reach out to you?

I had nothing to do with them. Matter of fact, you know I'm wrong. Because I met a lady in the fish market, the first year when we came to that country. We went down to the city market for fish. And there was a daughter and a mother talking, and I was with my mother, we was speaking Yiddish. And they say, they start speaking Yiddish, like the Mother said to her "*Golde, herst?"* [Yiddish: "Golde, do you hear?"] They speak Yiddish and whatever. And my mother say, "Oh they speak Yiddish too." We start go on a conversation. From one to another, it's the Gottleibs. It's Goldene and her mother was at the fish market. And we start talking, before you know, they're related. My mother's first, maybe the 10th… the 10th… whatever. She invited us for Sunday supper, and my mother start talking to, to her father. And his name was Laybish. My mother started talking to him, he started that he had an Uncle here, and that's how from one to another, they're *mishpokhe* [Yiddish: family, relatives]. That's why we start goin'… they picked us up every Sunday, for supper, for awhile until we got organized. As a matter of fact, when I bought the first house, I took them to show 'em if I should buy it or not. And of course, then I joined the synagogue and I start meeting people

And you grew up in an orthodox home?

Yes.

Did you have an orthodox home? You didn't have an orthodox home. You didn't, you weren't *shomer shabbes* [Hebrew: Sabbath observant] here?

I couldn't. I couldn't

Yeah, cause you had to work. Because you and your husband had to work. But you joined KI [Kehilath Israel Synagogue]?

Yes, I joined KI, and Rabbi Solomon immediately took us in, and Betty… we got so acquainted with both of them, she took me around places, and showed me things, and showed me life. And they invited us, we had lots of dinners there with them. And from one to another, I start meeting American people. But I was telling you about that restaurant.

Yeah.

When I went to the store for the job, I got the job. They give me the job immediately. And I was going to work two weeks. And I got paid twice a month, the 15th and the 1st. The first pay I got was $36 for two weeks. I already bought myself clothes for a $136! I say, "Ah no, this is not gonna work, not for me." So, I quit. And I start looking in the paper, I already know how to read a little bit. And I see pages: "Auto for sale, auto for sale, auto for sale, house for sale, house for sale." Didn't know what that means. So much for sale, I don't think. So, I question, I said, what is this, and what is this, and somebody explain it to me that "auto for sale" is the places where the storage, cars, and they have to advertise this. And I said, "Here it says house, and real estate!" Okay… I said "Real estate… I just bought a house, how can I make money on the house?" I called up a guy that was an ad in the paper, for a house on 35th Street, 35th right behind the Kansas City Life. And I

questioned him, "How much money do you need to put in a house like this? What is it all about?" And he said, "I was asking for the house $9,000. And you have to put at least $2,000 cash, and the bank will loan you the rest." I didn't have any $2,000 anymore. I come in with a ton, but the grocery here, and the grocery there, and the restaurant. I was broke. That's what put me in a position, I had to do something. I cannot go on any longer. I called one of my cousins in New York. He was already in New York. And I asked him, I said, "Did you save…" He was a single boy, "Did you save any money through the years…?" He was working in a factory [?]. "Of course I survive, why, why you need to know that?" I said frankly I don't care if you have money or not, but I need money. I need to borrow some money. I gave him money when I came to the country, I give everybody money, 'cause I had it. He said "How much money you need?" I said $2000. "Oh, I have $2000". Okay, he sent me check for $2,000 I bought that house. That was a house, a three-story house. I told my husband that let's go see what we can do to that house. We come to conclusion we can convert this, make three apartments. The first floor a kitchen, we installed in the second a kitchen, and then the third a kitchen. They have to share the work, whatever, those years everything was okay. We had it fixed up, the three apartments, rent them for good prices, we took out like $200 a month rent from the three units, and operate for a short time. And here comes Kansas City Life, and calls me one day. Do you own a building number so and so and so? Yes, why? I thought I done something wrong.

Yeah.

[?] or whatever for the city. The way the guy was talking [he thought I was a *shlepper*?]. He said "Kansas City Light would like to buy that house from you." I said why would they need a house like this? "We need parking, we gonna' tear down the house and more houses… but if you smart…" The man was talking to me like this… "If you smart, I know you don't speak good English, and maybe you don't understand. If you want, I come see you." I said "Yes I would appreciate if you come see me." We can talk… I don't know who I'll talk to.

Uh huh

The gentleman comes down on Virginia…

(End of Tape 2, Side 2)
(Beginning of Tape 3, Side 1)

I think it works… Okay.

Good luck.

So the man dressed up like a million dollars…

Yes, and he came in and we start talking. I said, do you realize I just bought that house several months, I give you the date and whatever. And if I sell it, what can I do with the

money, I have to give it to the government or whatever? He explained it to me, yes you have to pay a good chunk. At time, tax was like 50, 60% tax.

Oh really.

In the 50s there was a lot of tax. And so I said, maybe it doesn't worth it for me. He said, but I give you, I give you an idea what to… He could see that I'm not dummy in that respect but he wanted to give me ah… like help me out. He said if you hold it a year, you have a capital gain, and your capital gain was 20%. I said how can I hold it a year? We don't need the land yet, we just want to make sure that we buying all those homes. And, by the time, when we ready to tear them down, be more than a year. [?] What do you want for it? I said, frankly, I would like to have $20,000. I just said a number, I didn't know what. He said sell. So, I paid nothing.

Oh my gosh!

They let me hold it for a year and a half, and I collected rent. Then when they tear down, we had good relationship. I was later on doing business with him… a lot of business. They put me on the map.

Really?

Yes.

Is he still around?

Nah, he passed around. He was my friend. His wife was my friend, they was come to every event we had. He was the vice president from Kansas City Life. I was goin' to a meeting there, to the… If I come in for a loan that, I didn't have to talk to a *shlepper* the President come in, in the chamber we talked. And after a bit of it, from whatever the, when, when they took the building off from the ground, whatever was available to be used, like a stool, like a bathtub, like a faucet… they let me have it. I [storaged?] this everything, and with the money I took from them, I bought six units, a building. And like I said the rest is history.

And the rest is history. Wow, well that's a very interesting story. Did you, so were you always in business by yourself?

Why by myself? My husband…

I, I mean you and your family. It was just your family, it was just… well that's an interesting story.

Yes, yes. Of course, later on we went in on bigger investments. To a point, you know. Not like… you know. But, that was my start if you want.

And there it is.

I had no help to say, specific from a certain person or a business that someone took me in or somebody instructed me, no. Just by going on like this. Matter of fact, my second buy, I was seeing another ad in the paper, and I called the guy with the name Short Realty was downtown on… real estate company. His name, also the president was Miller, Charles Miller. I called him and I said I'm interested in so and so project. It was a bigger project on Armour Boulevard. And he said "Lady, do you know how much money you goin' need for that project?" I said no I don't, but I would like to talk to you before we even go in and price, and whatever. He invited me downtown, I come down downtown. We sit down and talk and after I sit with him 20, 25 minutes, he pulled out a file. He said, "Now listen, I know you [set for?], you want property and you gonna buy property, whether I let you go into or not, but be careful. Put out a [file?] he said. "You buy everything on the West Side." And that was in the fifties. West of Troost, nothing East of Troost. And I say why not? "Because the future is not gonna be in that side." I said how would you know what's coming in the future? We didn't know the future…

Yeah, right.

We had a good discussion, and from that time on… I bought from him the project, it was, it was a lot. It was several hundred thousand dollars. I didn't have the money, but I bought it. I sold it later on, there's no use even talking about it.

But you made profit?

Ah, yeah I made a profit. And I was doing business with that man til'… With whoever I start with. But I'm not complaining that no Jews helped me. Maybe they're not in my field. They're not, they didn't understand my life, but all those helps I had, were gentiles. Very kind to me, very reasonable. They helped me with loans, if I couldn't get… I hardly had a loan from a Jewish bank…

Really… Because you couldn't get one or because you had experience with others?

No… I don't think it was so easy to get. They want you to give them collateral you, and your husband, and your children and your furniture and your jewelry whatever.

Yeah, and your first-born grandchild right…

The fact is, I got Kansas City Life, I got Union Bank, and UM Bank…

Uh huh, UMB.

I got, I was so easy wherever I went for money, I had no problem whatsoever to that point.

Recognized a good business person.

I don't know what they seeing in me, but anything I want, my terms… You know what they liked about me? It's a funny thing so I'm gonna' talk about it. When we sit down in a meeting and we start talking about numbers, they always use a calculator. Don't forget we talking about the fifties and sixties, they come up with the rate, the interest and the principle, the terms, the length… whatever. I never knew this. I just come out with whatever… they said a million dollars over 25 years, interest rate eight and a half seven, whatever, I figured it out number, and I gave them the answer what goin' be the monthly payment. They looked at me, they say… they look I have a pencil, a pen or something! What I'm doing, how I come up with it. But that's, that was so easy for me, because you see in Europe, they teach you math different then here. And we never depend on a calculator, we never depend on like a computer. Forget about it. So, everybody was… everything we had is those little build up things with those rollers back and forth. So instead of working hard, your register right here.

Right, right. Yah so you earn their respect and…

That was very impressive to them. I dealt with such a high, high top people. And every time the lenders was coming in from different cities, because we was doing Metropolitan, we was doing with Mid-Connecticut Mutual, big lenders. And they was so impressed with my... even on the telephone if I gave them all the information before they even went any farther, "Go ahead, go ahead. Sign a loan, sign a loan." Never personal liable?

So, America's been very very good to you?

Yes, yes that's for sure

So, are you… are you an American citizen?

Oh… What a question.

When did you become a citizen?

Five years after I came to the country.

Really… the, the five years? Most people didn't come, I don't think were citizens that quickly, were they?

Oh yes. If you don't want to, if you don't want to go through school you have to. I mean you don't have to, but we felt it's very important.

Right. So, let's talk a little bit about your life… Not so much your business life but your life in America, just a little bit about… Well, let me ask this first before I go on. You're such a business person, do you have hobbies, do you have recreational activities?

Business is my hobby, business is my life.

You don't play cards, you don't ski…Right I figured.

I was criticized by a lot of friends that I devote all my life to money. I said not to money…

To, to business.

I like it what I'm doing.

Sure, there is certainly nothing wrong with that. So, what about you're feelings as an… Do you feel like you're an American?

Yeah.

Some people, I was sitting in a discussion with somebody else and they said it's not their country. They didn't feel America was their country, but...

I don't see why… I tell you what they probably mean to tell you in a different fashion. You buy it as you here. But it's not so. It's not what they say, it's not a country. Now we got used to the idea. But actually, we was not used to that kind of life. That's not the kind of friendship what you have in Europe between each other. If you have friends or you have neighbors or you have family, you get together more often. You see each other more in that… Now by the way, the neighbors, everyone open the door for you, if you need something, you don't have to go buy. What do you need? Egg, sugar, milk, whatever! Here we felt like everyone closed the door. Unless you really close with somebody, one to one. And that was a little bit against us. We felt like it's us, the survivors. But after years, we come to conclusion, no that's the kind of life we live here.

Do you think it would be different if this, were you surprised at Kansas City that it wasn't a little town. Did you expect it to be a little farming community?

No, I didn't expect anything less that what was. Because we came here, it was just 500,000 population. That's not a big city.

Right, but it wasn't, it wasn't like farms?

No, listen Regensburg is the same size, was also 500 population. We had cities in Europe what I was in them was larger then this…

Right, but I mean…

More industry and more, and more sophisticated, more a lot of things.

No, but I mean you did, the books you read in your library when you were in Germany, you know you said farms. I thought maybe you would think this was a little farming community.

No.

Well, it wasn't, it's not the bustling city but it's…

No, they told me. And the information was given to me, the population and the size of the city. I had a full description of the city, and I was not disappointed, and I was not impressed. Because there was nothing particular what I could be impressed with.

Did you think that - were you given the impression of America with its streets paved of gold? Did people talk about that?

No. No, I was too young to listen to all those *bubbe mayses* [Yiddish: old wives' tales], like they say. You know I was just, like a student coming out from school, and you look for a job and you find a job and that's it.

Do you have, are you involved in… say some of the wars. Cold War, Vietnam War. Does that… do you involve you self at all in that.

Yes, I, in a way… If I go in and politic for example, what in that might be because of change of age. Now I understand better, and I didn't realize in my time what's a war and why, why people… why we fight, even now. We had history, we learned a lot why Country A and Country B was having… all this [kind of?]. And I, I even remember the story about the pogrom in Russia. I will remember why they start World War I. Because after all, that's all history. But to read, and to listen to a professor, and to live through is too different things. And after we lived through, I have a different opinion of all those things. Of course, my opinion doesn't mean anything, nobodies goin' ask me why or what. But I feel this politic is dirty. There nobody does for the good of the nation, for the good of the citizen, just to help himself. Power and money. And maybe it's all over the world the same way. But my experiences here, because here I'm 50 years. Over there I was a short time, 18, 19 years.

What about the civil rights movement? Were you, did you, did that affect you? Were you involved in that?

No, but did affect me. I felt like the minority is always under some kind of depressed life. They don't have the freedom what they entitled to it. In that particular case I didn't care about black, white, or yellow… anything. I just felt who is the majority is taking advantage on them.

Do you feel… do you see yourself as a minority?

Maybe not anymore, because not this is any difference in that country than any, you have antisemitism here. You have, and all over the world, not just I'm not talking about Europe. The whole world doesn't like Jews. And this, this I can go forward, and not make a statement what I cannot verify. But the things is, when I see here, even the black people have more problems then the Jews… God forbid, if something would go wrong with our, let's say… if we get something in that nature what I hope never happen, what we had in

Germany, even the black would go for Jews. They would kill them faster than, than any other. Even they under so depressed life. That's why I feel like we have the freedom here, because there is so many so many different nations, different…

Nationalities.

And it's difficult to point out, are you a Christian, are you a Catholic, are you a Jew, are you a Hindu… or whatever. And if their goin' start goin' in like this… that's why we was afraid for David Duke to take some kind of government position because it starts with a little something, and it builds, builds, builds.

Right, and that's something you took notice of. Somebody like David Duke.

Oh yes, I know it's not just him.

And Pat Buchanan.

I've seen in some, in some papers, in something stories what that can blow you away.

[Like?] Hitler… Unbelievable. What about the, what about Israel, the State of Israel? Do you feel closer to that then…

Oh yes. I, my statement was always from day one, if we would have a country in 1939, Hitler wouldn't have that power, and nobody in the world would have that. I blame more England. The English regime what they didn't let the Jews go through then any country in the world.

So, you think the State of Israel was allowed to become in existence because of the war?

No.

You think it would be anyway?

It would be anyway.

As quickly as it was?

Maybe not. But there was in '36, there was… I was not involved in it, but I remember my brother want to go to a kibbutz with a group of boys to work in the kibbutz long enough and go to Israel, as fighters. So that's already start before all the original stories coming out. Eventually yes, we would have an Israel. I'm sure that helped. Because after a depressing life like this, maybe there was some institutions where they felt sorry were the few leftovers.

In light of your past experiences… our collective past experiences in Germany, how did, how did having children affect you? Did you think maybe I don't want to bring children into a world like this? Or did you ever think about that?

No, no, no. I never thought about this. I always thought this, we have to see to build a new world, and a better world.

Did you, are your children named after any family members?

Yes, yes everyone is named after a family member.

So, we talked at the beginning. You didn't really talk about this much with your children, your experiences as they were growing up.

No, no. Because I don't want to put into them the feelings. You see I want them to be believers. That we have something above us, and he will help us. Because I'm a believer. Maybe, or, right or wrong that's another question. Nobody has to accept my way of thinking. But, by keeping that poison, what we went through there. We was so depressed under those circumstance, and we still believe. And our family was taken away from us in such a young time, and we still believe it's God's wishes. Then in some cases, my experiences that some Jews start saying they took my father, they took my mother, they took my family, so how I know it's really true we have a God. If we have a God, we the chosen people, he should save us. And if you put poison into your children, and you keep talking about it, you don't know what you goin' bring out from it.

So, so what prompted you to start talking about it?

We never talked about… very bad things. We always talked about unfortunately, we was born to live, to help, to exist. And when our time is to go, we go. When I tell them about my brother, he was 20 years old, it can't go through their mind. I says he was assigned when he was born that short life he has. It's true or not, it's my story.

Absolutely, whatever… what need to live with. How you interpret it. So, you said that your husband didn't want you to write down stories and your experiences.

No, no. He didn't want to remember all those things. When we ever opened a movie, a Hitlers things, or Gestapo or some kind of unfortunate uncomfortable things you called off, you went in another room. He didn't want to go back, he didn't want the picture in front of him.

But you start talking about it when they built, when they start building the Holocaust Museum in Washington?

Yes. And we start, we start looking into it, and we say now is time, now is time. The world started getting a little more into it. It's time to tell my children to understand why we

should work with them, and help if we can, and give them stories. Frankly, my husband didn't give them any stories.

Really?

Yeah, we was in Washington 5, 6 times. We was on opening, we was on everything, what they invited us because we was a part of the starters of the … when they start building, and of course financially we did this good too. And my son is still on the board, but my husband didn't want to give his story.

So how old were your children, when you first told them your stories, the stories about…

They don't know stories. They know just little piecemeals, pieces… pieces.

Everything we've talked about now…

No, no, no.

They don't know any of this?

Half of it, maybe a part of it maybe. And nothing one sentence, or one statement. But maybe sometime we talk some friends of ours…

Something comes out.

Right, from other cities. Or we have a wedding or we have some bar mitzvah some kind of event, and the Israeli's come in and the New Yorkers come in. We start talking our past. Naturally their friends of ours, or family of ours. So, we come into some stories, and that's what they know about.

So, would, would you want them to hear this?

They might have to hear this sometime or another.

Yeah, they should hear this. Maybe it's easier for them to hear it… easier for you for them to hear it on a tape.

Honey, this is not one tenth of our story.

I'm sure, I'm sure.

If we talk about stories, I have to sit with you… I have to write a book of 900 page. Then it be my story.

And do you want to do that?

No.

You don't?

It's not important anymore.

It's not… you don't feel you have to give it out?

No, it's not important. Whatever I do… can I help anybody with it? Will this change the world? Will this change the feelings from one to each other? No.

No, probably not.

We do the best we can, some little history to left after.

So, do they ask you questions?

Who?

Your kids ask you questions?

Sometime, sometime, but they never get real answer.

They never get the… yeah.

I'll tell you, my husband was shot twice, in the, in the time of the [?] episode. If I goin' go in into, in true story, in the first time he was shot, two those tapes wouldn't answer.

I would think, I would think your kids would want to know that. But you know, you don't know the questions to ask. And I'm sure that they have had experience with people and maybe they want…

I feel confident that people, some people, come out and a lot of information would helps. I don't feel my story would help.

Not help, but you know, that's, I would think, if you're my mother, that's my history. You know your life is my history. And I want to know that.

Yeah, I want them to know from their family tree who their family was. For what type of people, their whole stories started. This sometimes we talk. Hard to go through all those details from the bunker, from food, you know when she throw down… it's a pitty to talk about it. She throw down three potatoes, with the skin, from when she took it out from the cobble, from where you give the horses to eat. And this we have to share 7 people. And this to talk about it? And the mice used to walk around like, like children, our children.

Like the run the place. So, what do you think about the people who talk, who are talking about it, the holocaust a lot, writing books and talking…

It's, it's fine. Listen, it cannot hurt. Because like every history, you go back, and read from George Washington, read from Alexander Hamilton, read all kind of story, this sometime, maybe not now, right now we still have a substantial amount of survivors. Maybe 50%, 25%, whatever it's still left…

Less and Less.

Where you can conduct a conversation in life. Fifty years from now, 30 years from now, if our world is still goin' be existing, maybe somebody will be interested to read that book. And say, oh you remember, they used to say, we'll make a story from it, or whatever.

What, what do you think about, what they were just talking about, about the Americans, who have taken some of the, in the news, very recently, Stuart Eisenstadt, they're talking about maybe some of the spoils of wars, survivors' artifacts, art or whatever. The Americans have taken.

Frankly, I don't know. I would agree with this. Even if you, you talking to doctors sometime, and they tell you 99% of survivors have problems. That's their opinion. I say it's not true. And it's not true. It's true, every human being in life, if he have a bad pass, or something goes through his life, where he didn't accept it, I agree. There is a future uncomfortable history about it. You don't have to be a survivor, you don't have to go to a war, you don't… If this is true, every soldier which comes back from a war, would be crazy, need a psychiatrist. Right?

Maybe… What do you think about the, the, their trying to get the, the, the gold, the paintings and the artwork?

Frankly, I tell you. It's not a matter of that wealth, this, you or me or somebody individual should ask for. We should have asked for each and every country to send all those thing up to Israel. Because everybody in that country, other country is settled. The majority. I would say, you maybe have 10% of older generation what they life from a social security check. But 90% of survivors are settled well enough they can finish their life with what they have. Okay? They shouldn't worry about their children. Because their children are born here, they have education, 75% of children are doctors, lawyers, any other professional people or business people. Okay? So, they will make it without the parents giving another $100,000, or $50,000 or whatever. That money should have one place, and one place is Israel.

Is Israel.

So, Israel can be strong enough incase of anything happen. Cause' money talks. And why everybody looking for that extra $10,000, $5,000 is beyond me. Okay?

Yeah, no, it's an interesting… I've heard that before. I've definitely, especially, the things, the things that can't be identified.

Maybe I'm wrong. I didn't ask for *Wiedergutmachung* [German: restitution, reparations] my husband didn't ask for *Wiedergutmachung,* we don't didn't fill out any paperwork. We didn't get a pension, and I don't feel sorry for myself. I do what I can to be around and do the best I can.

So why do you think? Why do you think you've adjusted so well, and other people, even who have been successful you know, in business or whatever, are still haunted. Why do you think?

This, this is not a question. I tell you there is people and people I have here. I don't this on the tape.

[Tape stops briefly]

What time is it? Oh my goodness! Look how late..

You husbands gonna give you…

I told him I'd be an hour.

Tell him, tell him not this time, next time.

That's right, I'll get a note to tell you that I was looking through.

Go ahead with the last one.

The last one was that, do you think that most Americans take the freedoms that they have for granted?

[Someone enters]

[Tape stops]

Does it… What does being American mean to you

[Phone rings, tape stops]

Do you think that Americans take their freedoms for granted given what you had to go though.

Yes. Yes, absolutely yes.

And you think that, maybe, they do, they not understand what's at stake?

I think that what I see here in my 50 years, everybody has spoiled here, having whatever they need. Even the poor people have more then, then European had all through they're life. I'm not talking, financially, they had a better house they have more furniture, they have more… money, but everything together they have more in their mind that's coming to them. Somebody earning a living, somebody should be a part of… whatever they need. And that's was not happening. Everybody had to work for himself and be a sponsor for his own life.

Yeah, it's, doesn't really happen here. What do you think… If you had to narrow it down, what do you think the lessons of the Holocaust are?

That's a good question. That's difficult to answer.

Are there lessons of the Holocaust? Because there continue different holocausts all the time.

No, because you see the Holocaust doesn't tell you exactly. It's happen because we Jews. It just so happen they start with the Jews because of the wealth, not because of the relation. But then when you get deeper and deeper, the jealousy, the wealth, the Jewish people are a little smarter then average. The Jewish people are a little bit more organized then the average. And that's a jealousy.

We're different.

Yes.

I agree.

And I don't go by religion, like the holy holy's say, we the chosen people. Nobody… wish they wouldn't have chosen us.

Yeah, chose somebody else, and let us… Give us the Torah without really choosing us.

That's, that's another story. Yes. Were not the chose, we just happy to be… maybe now we change into… but we happen to be… using our life in a different way. Using our brains, using our opportunities. The circumstances are different in our life. We born right away with the idea to be a *mensh*, [Yiddish: proper human being], do on your own. Ninety percent of it, I'm not speaking for the whole world.

Well for as much as…

If we talking about majority.