United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Maria Rosenbloom
September 23, 1996
RG-50.030*0379

PREFACE

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MARIA ROSENBLOOM
September 23, 1996

01:01:03

Question: Hello Maria, welcome to Washington.

Answer: Thank you, Joan.

Q: Could you tell me the name that you were born with and when and where you were born?

A: Yes. I was born December 26, 1918, which in Poland is Christmas, so I'm a Christmas child. And I was born in the city of Kolomyja, which at the time I was born was Poland, it was newly created Poland. Before then, it was Hapsberg, Austria. Therefore, my parents spoke German and I was brought up in the German language. My parents eventually learned some Polish but they didn't like the language, so at home the language was German. When I came to school I naturally had to learn Polish so at the age of five-and-a-half I entered a Polish school in Kolo-mier (ph) and I said something in Polish which didn't sound right because it was not my initial language. So the children, including the teacher, started laughing, making fun of me. Naturally, it was quite traumatic. I ran home crying, crying I'll never go to school again. Well, I did go back. And I've been a student for many, many years later. Interesting enough, when I thought about this experience many years ago, I think it played an important role in my later life choice of Polish as the aid of concentrations university, strange as it may sound. But there are some dynamics that turned it upright anyway so this was my experience. Actually, I was writing still, I still am, and German and Polish are pretty much my languages even though, although they have both deteriorated. Well, the way I remember Kolomyja, it was a small town, although it wasn't small to the eyes of a child. And later when I visited the smaller towns, the villages around, it seemed that Kolomyja was big. It's an interesting thing about Kolomyja that, as I write about it just years later, many years later, that Ta-pan-gee (ph) was an important city during the earlier centuries. It's very old. They just celebrated seven hundred and fifty years of the birth of the town and they say it goes back even further. It was

ransacked, it was demolished, it was burned all the way, many times, first by the Tartars, then by the Mongols, or vise-versa, then by the Cossacks. There were endless destruction's and occupations of Kolomyja. I do not know how far my father's family goes back. The name was Hiersch (ph) and I was born as Matylda Hirsch.

01:04:02

My parents wanted to Polonaise my name because that was important for them, I assume, as many parents do, but at home I was called Mattie because my parents spoke German. My father spoke Yiddish with many of his helpers in the store and business with some of the people in the community, but my mother was very snobbish about it. She came from another city called Chad-no-vich (ph). Czernowitz was a bigger city, it was a very snobbish city, it was, they called themselves small Paris, little Paris. Her parents lived there. Actually, I knew only her father because her mother died just before I was born and I was named after her mother. So she had that air of Czernowitz about her and she despised Kolomyja and she despised Ukrainian town and she despised the Polish people and she didn't want to hear any of the Yiddish language. So, sadly enough, I was brought up in the German language and German was the language, but certainly I spoke Polish later and, with my girlfriends it was always Polish. There was a city itself, I saw it only forty years ago for the first time I went back. It's a handsome city now and as I read some of it's history, it had a rich history, over the centuries it was a town in which a lot of trade was going on. It was on the tracks between Poland and Austria and Romania, so apparently business and trade was very important. My own father came from a whole generation of people who owned the same store, the same business. This was porcelain and enamel and glass. So we always had the very beautiful table settings because of their availability. I remember that when my older sister got married, and her husband didn't have a profession, so my father took him into the business. But smartly gave him a special division of it, so he became the importer of chandeliers. It all sounds very, very strange but this was back in our time. My father was Orthodox, my mother came also

from a religious family, but not as Orthodox. So there was a little bit cheating, I suppose, but she wore a wig because it was important in our home town. My father was a follower of Rabbi, he was a Hasidic, a follower of a Rabbi called Wishnitz, he came from the city of Vinnitsa. Apparently he was important in the Rabbinical dynasty and as a child I remember the Wishnitz (ph) Rabbi coming and staying in our home and I didn't like it.

Q: Why?

01:06:59

A: I was crushed by the, by the tone of all these people. He would come, I was very young then, he would come Thursday night for Sukkotbat. So on Thursday night, from the railway station, he would come escorted by about 200 hus-a-dem (ph), some from his own entourage' and some from our home town, and because it was dark, it was evening, they would come with, the German name comes back, "Falken", these lightings, strobes carried in the street, torches, right? Now it comes back. I sometimes think in German from my childhood years. So they were full of torches and to the dark night of my home town, which was very Anti-Semitic, although I wasn't exposed to it, I sensed it, and the women would stand on the balcony and greet them, saw them coming in. Since I was so young, to me this was an overwhelming picture and I said I didn't like it. They all came into our house, which was big and he would give him the biggest room. In front of his room was a Gabbai, a Gabbai was the assistant of the man who collected the quitels, and quitels is something that a Jew would write out on a paper asking the Rabbi for advice. So together with the paper I assume that the Rabbi got the money too. I suspect it so. But anyway, the Gabbai stood in front of our living room where the Rabbi held court and he would see people. Hundreds of people would walk through our home. And to me this was overwhelming, very unhappy kind of experience. I was the youngest and I think on me it worked more than on my sisters because I was already born into Poland, it made a difference. Since I'm the youngest, my experience of learning school and otherwise was different than that of my older sisters. It shows you the meaning of history.

Q: What's the difference in age between you and your sisters?

A: Five years each, five years each. My older sister was Cyla, C-Y-L-A if you want it, and there was a difference of twenty years between us all. I'm not sure, but something like it. She married Jacob Goldstein, a man from Lvov who didn't have money and didn't have much of a profession, but he was the son of a Talmudist and to my father, that was important. So, there was a tremendous wedding, all my sisters had tremendous weddings except me, and their only son, Menek, survived the war. I don't know whether I should go into, she was killed in the last days of the ghetto and her husband was transported to the Belzec Extermination Camp in 1942.

01:10:01

Anyway, that was my sister, Cyla, and she lived a pretty middle-class, it was pretty prosperous. Her hobby was to do petite work, petite point, and I remember her beautiful pictures on the walls, all her own work. This was her hobby. She was well known in town, she had girlfriends and when their son was born, it was a great thing because he was the only boy in the family, until then we had nothing but girls. Now the next sister was Frieda, her name, my sister Cyla, was Cyla Goldstein, that was her name and her son is Menek Goldstein, and he survived. My next sister was Frieda. She was very beautiful. Frieda married a man who was a cousin, a second cousin. He came from Cal-es-sa-bot (ph), from a resort town, very well known spot in Europe. His father was a brother of my father, but that was of a different mother so they were step-brothers. And therefore, it was permitted for them to marry, even so, they worried that they're offspring may suffer from it and be mentally retarded, whatever. She ain't, she's a doctor of eye diseases. She turned out to be okay. But this wedding, I remember vaguely. I only remember my dress, I don't know why. It was the most beautiful dress I've ever had. And their wedding was held in Stanislawow, a city a little bit bigger than Kolomyja. This is somehow, I still remember. No, she lived in Karlsbad (ph) which means she lived in a privileged place because Karlsbad (ph) was a beautiful international spot and

he was making a good living, he had many patients so it was sort of high life. Anyway, in 1938 Hitler occupied . . .

Q: Wait, you've missed a sister.

A: Oh, you want to go this way, sure. Then the younger sister, also five years younger, is Frania. Frania survived. By the way, my sister Frieda survived and in Czechoslovakia they got out of Dorosig into Palestine. She's still alive, she's unfortunately in a nursing home now and her husband died a few years ago. Then, there's my sister, Frania. She's alive, she lives in my neighborhood, her husband was killed, and they're child, Laszek, Alex, was about three years old in the ghetto and miraculously he survived and he lives in New York City. Though she later re-married and her second husband adopted him so his name is Alex Gitterman.

01:13:04

And then comes me. I was the youngest. No, my sisters still had a background of Hapsberg, Austria, although Frania was very young then. In 1916 I believe, my parents ran from Kolomyja because of the war. And they came to, they ran to a place which is near Sigit, Marmorosk I think, which is where Wiesel comes from, which was a border of Romania and Hungary. There were large Jewish communities there. My father went into hiding there because the Austrian army was busy trying to find men to fight their war, they needed my father naturally, so they lived a very, very difficult kind of life. I think they lived in Mon-room-a-vot (ph). And at that time I still had another sister, whom I never met, she died right there. She was between Cyla and Frieda and I think she was fourteen years old when she developed a serious appendix condition and there was no time to get to the hospital, she died right in my father's arms, I understand. Some things that I heard about years later, my parents didn't talk about it, but it was always in the air and I suspected that something happened there, but I say, I was born after, I didn't know. Only about ten years ago, walking in the beautiful woods of Switzerland, my mother's younger brother told me about it. They talked about her in some ways, her name was Yetta, but it was hushed-hushed and it was never quite

there. I'm sure that my childhood was spent in a family which suffered from depression, yet it was not, it was covered over. Probably because my father was a Hasidic and in the Hasidic tradition, joy and pain are mixed. So, I think so, in looking back at it that my childhood was very complex because it was a Hasidic family and my mother was, had that air of a bigger city with more civilization and the country in which I lived was Polish Anti-Semitic, so I would think I have the strength of all of that in some way in my own personality. But, I remember there were times of when my mother would cry and this was the anniversary, not only of the deaths of my sister and her daughter, but the death of her mother. They all lived in that hiding place near Sigit there and my grandmother, her mother, died of a heart attack, apparently still a young woman, so for my mother it must have been a horrible loss. She would go to visit her father later, she once took me to Czernowitz and this I remember. These things are very vague in my memory because they were not talked about, but it was there in the air and from time to time I would overhear something.

01:16:01

There's a good possibility I tried to protect myself from the pain too. So I grew up in this family in which I was extremely important because only years back later, I could understand the importance of me. Because I had to replace all these losses, I'm sure. So, I was an extremely overprotected child to the extent that I hated it, I was embarrassed by it. When I sneezed, there was immediately a doctor around me. When I went to school, and I forgot my breakfast, somebody from the store would knock at the door of my class and bring me the breakfast. My mother was extremely anxious about me and my parents over-protected me in a way which probably helped them some way but also did not. So my sister Frania, I think, was a little bit jealous, I never knew about it because no matter what I did was fine. Which means I wasn't prepared for the hardships of life that later came my way. I was a child who could never do wrong. And they thought I was bright and I did extremely well in school. To the end of my sister because she didn't do so well, she was pretty and

she liked to go with boys and she wasn't so interested in studies. I was, all of my, the grades were always above 'A', you know? Once I brought a 'B', I cried for weeks! I got a 'B' in mathematics which was unbelievable because it was always 'A's in other subjects and my preferred subject was Polish literature, romantic Polish literature.

Q: Did this create a problem between you and your mother?

A: No. I was a child who was smart. I don't think I was pretty, my sisters were pretty, my two sisters, Frania and Frieda were very pretty, but I never experienced a sense that I wasn't okay. Looks didn't matter. I was accepted. I say I was, scholastically, I did so extremely well. My sister, Frania, still remembers with pain that when my mother would go to the teachers for the periodic visitations, they would say, how come your daughter, Frania, cannot do that well? I'm sure it didn't do her any good, but that's what she remembers. But she was very pretty.

Q: Tell me a little bit about your violin playing?

A: Oh, how do you know this? As, I must have been six years old, eight years old, I'm not sure. My parents hired a violin teacher for Frania and myself. And we didn't like it. But anyway, I mastered in playing the Hatikva so every Saturday night, many guests, our house was full of guests always.

01:19:07

I think I still carry this tradition to some extent. We had to play, the ha-tic-fa (ph) had to play, a few other things. It was not something that I really liked very much. Probably I couldn't identify with the teacher. We also had a teacher of Hebrew. Darlis Bate (ph). And him we hated! He was a poor, old Jew who didn't know to teach. My sister and I use to bribe him, give him a zloty and he would go, he would leave earlier. Unfortunately, we didn't learn much so until these days, I cannot read any of the Hebrew text and I'm sorry about it, I wish I could. But this was my mother, my mother looked away because it wasn't as important to her and as girls, we were not suppose to learn much of the Hebrew text. We never was suppose to go to synagogue until you're married so I never

went to synagogue because when I married, the war was on and I've never gone to a synagogue. I remember, right after the war, there was some gathering of the American soldiers and I was included and it was in a synagogue in Heidelberg, I'm not even sure, but occasionally I go now to religious service but a synagogue is not part of my life and this is because of my background.

Q: Were your friends primarily, if not all together, Jewish?

A: All were Jewish. Well, in primary school, what you call, elementary school, there were non-Jewish students too. I do not recall contact with them. I had two close friends, both were neighbors on both sides of our house. We use to visit with each other. My main preoccupation was with reading. When my girlfriends would come and to ask where I was, my mother or whoever was around would say, you'll find her in a book!

01:21:00

This was my childhood, I was an avid reader. But I liked to play with them and both of them were killed, but we use to go away a lot. I think this too established my pattern of traveling later in life. For ten weeks, every year, my parents would remove me from school a little earlier. It had to start the 15th of June and I wouldn't come back until sometime in September. Every year we would go to the mountains. My mother believed that we didn't look well enough, that we needed all the fresh air. She believed in these things. So we went to the Carpatian Mountains because my home town is surrounded by the Carpatian Mountains, Kolomyja is the entry to the Carpatian Mountains. We would go to different places, the names may mean nothing, but from time to time they crop up. Losuv, Garemcze, Delatyn, these were the places. The way we would go, it was so funny, my father would stay behind and he would come one week. But we would go for the ten weeks and we took everything along because these were pretty primitive villas. My mother insisted on a villa which was inside and which was always surrounded by trees; apple trees, pear trees and plumb trees. Poland has a lot of very delicious fruit so there had to be trees, that was the requirements of hiring a villa. And it had to be close to the street but not too close, close to the street so we could

look and see some traffic but not too close so nobody would come close to us. And it had to be on a little river. On a little stream. And we would go swimming there, not swimming really, sitting under the stones. My sister, Cyla, made it into her real hobby. She would go every morning, sit under these stones in which you had a, what do you call it, little water fall and she would sit there for hours hoping she would loose weight this way. She was overweight and she wanted to loose weight, this was her idea. One day, she decided she really wants to do it more professionally so there was a man from Warsaw, a Polish man, who ran a special spa for the loosing weight. He was Anti-Semitic to the core. His name was Dr. Tarnovsky, but Jewish middle-class women like all the others went there to loose weight. Well, she didn't like that too much so one day they had an afternoon off and she went to the village and she moved into Konditorai, a cafe. Konitorai I knew was a very special institution. It's coffee and hot chocolate and there was beautiful pastries. So, she eats here pastry and drinks the chocolate and here walks in Dr. Tarnovsky and he sees that thing, he walks over to her and he slaps her, right across her face.

01:24:02

Well, this was an awakening for her. She never went back to that spa anymore. But this was the situation. Part of it was, anti-Semitism in Poland just had its full way, in different ways, but I personally did not experience it in elementary school, perhaps not in elementary school but in High School. Until I come to that, I remember these different locations of our traveling to for this summer, and it was a whole trip. In front of us was always a carriage with horses which would carry our beddings, our dishes, our household kosher which meant you needed double dishes, and some furnishings. This was in front and in the back was Fiakev, a drosh-ka (ph), with my mother, my father if it was for the week-end and all children. There was a maid, a woman to clean and it had to be a Jewish maid to cook because we were Kosher. So coming to these places, my mother believed in good air, fresh air and food. So she wanted us to drink milk from the cow. And she would bribe us. So food was always something which they had to beg us to eat. I would get either

a zloty or a big piece of chocolate to drink that milk and I always managed to avoid drinking that milk. It was a game going on, I still hate milk for this reason. I was so ostioperosis probably because I didn't drink enough milk.

Q: This time away from, did this make all of you much closer than you would have been?

A: We were a very close family, always a very close family. Close in the family was a prescription I'm sure of my family, probably because it's a Jewish tradition but probably because they had suffered losses. So, to my parents, the business was important to my father and he was a very good businessman, family was all that mattered, always. And to us it still does. Now we have fragments of the family but family is still very important to us, to all of us. So I was brought up with this, I was suffocated by it, I really didn't like that much closeness. And with my colleagues who had more space, and I always wanted more space. My whole traveling in my life was always getting more space. These were the consequences of that emotional overcrowding, extremely so.

Q: Were there political discussions that you remember as you grew up?

01:27:06

A: By the way, yes. I wasn't involved politically until sometime later in my gymnasium years. Yes, the Kolomyja, like most towns in Poland, had a lot of political divisions among the Jewish people. There was the Main Zionist, and there were Left Zionist, the Communist, the Socialist, the Liberals, the Divisionists, you name it. Amazing, a small city like Kolomyja which only had 40,000 people, half of them were Jewish, they had about a few Jewish newspapers. It was a highly literate city. I wasn't among them because my parents protection some how or other excluded me. My parents protection and my need for the Polish patriotism somehow excluded me much from it, as strange as it is. But I had liberal ideas. My parents, my father worried about it, that I was going very liberal at one point. But I didn't join a particular group. However, there were many, many groups. Most of the Jewish people in Kolomyja as in most of Poland were poor. There were people

who were really poor and then there was the middle class, upper middle class, and a very few who were really extremely rich. There must have been, but in my home town the middle class and upper middle class were the rich people. I remember, I still have a great pain when I think about the poverty in my home town. My first memory is of the water carriers. We lived in a house in which the apartment was on top of the business and there were wide staircases. And the water carriers, all whom were Jewish, they were carrying up the water, big cans, because there was no other way of getting water. The water came from a main fountain in the city, on Mokra Street. Mokra Street is well known because there are survivors like Dov Noi, who's well know, he comes from MokraStreet. Many people lived on MokraStreet. It was the poorest neighborhood and there was a big fountain and the water carriers possibly were on the lowest rank of the Jewish community. And they carried that water upstairs. I remember once, on a very cold day, and Kolomyja being in the Ukraine, a cold, cold climate. I asked my mother, how come this man has ice on his hands? Doesn't he like to wear gloves? This was my awakening, that some people didn't have money for gloves. The poverty was everywhere and when I think of that poverty, I think of them like of the closest family because there was no right for them to suffer such an end as these people did. They really never had any life. There was a lot of stigma about being poor and there was a lot of sukkotme.

01:29:52

In my High School, which was a Jewish Gymnasium, it was one of the sets of gymnasiums, it was a chain of, called Zyowskie Towarzystowo szkoty Ludoweii Sreduig, it was a chain of Jewish Gymnasiums established in Poland, which was run by the Jewish parents, who established it. They paid for it, it was extremely expensive. Somehow or other, because there was no gymnasium for Jewish girls after elementary school, ten parents got together and established it. My parents and nine others. And they took in one parent who didn't have money. Their name was Neiman and she was Sophia Neiman. I still remember the pain and the stigma and the sense of sukkotme. She wore

clothes which came from America, which means she had a coat which was red. Only American children wore red coat, we never wore red coat. In High School you wore navy. And this was such a stigmatic thing. And another thing I remember is that outside was a school building, was an old Jew who was selling some food, potatonik, and you could buy it with butter or with margarine. Margarine was half price of butter, and she would buy the margarine potato. All these things stay with me because it was so unjust. Well, of the ten students, we were ten students and ten teachers. All teachers were Jewish. They came from Warsaw, from the big cities. We had to be more pious than the Pope in achieving our accreditation because the commission would come down from Warsaw and we had to be good. So we had ten teachers to ten students. And of the ten students, miraculously, unbelievably, all survived! All the teachers were killed. I wanted to bring you pictures, some how I couldn't get it down from my wall, it was heavy. But I be jumping a little bit. This was the gymnasium years and it was all Jewish students, all Jewish teachers. It was considered a high level gymnasium. It is described in the book about Poland by Dr. Sylvia Helliard, you may know about it, called "An Air of Destruction". She has quite a bit about these schools.

Q: Were you all close, all the students, including the one who was somewhat stigmatized or what about that one?

A: Well, she was not stigmatized by us, we just felt the stigma. I felt the stigma. For reason, I don't know why, I still don't know why I identified with the underdog. Some way or other I assume it eventually led me to social work, but I didn't know the origins of it.

Q: But you, of course, were living in very privileged ways?

A: I lived by comparison, I'm sure here in America it now would not be because of it, but by comparison with the others, and I had a lot of pain about it. Probably was a part of my rebelling against my parents, whatever it was that came into it, that I became very liberal. The pain about witnessing so much poverty still stays with me whenever I think about what happened. But anyway.. So, this was the gymnasium years, we had to study a lot. We had to study Latin, eight years of Latin, that's a lot of Latin. We had to study, the only thing we didn't like is religion. Of course because the teacher wasn't great. I had marvelous teachers of Polish literature, one of them

became my role model. I think she played an important part in my choice of this profession later. We had a teacher of German literature, we had mathematics, which was not my subject somehow or other. But I couldn't afford to have a 'B' ever so my parents hired a tutor. I fell in love with the tutor, my first adolescent crush, and a learned it and I passed exams very well. Then we had a lot of gym. I wasn't great in gym, just passing. What else did we have? Certainly geography and history, history was always my great interest and remained so. Geography and history. In the University, I had to decide, study was history. I believe that you don't understand people without history. In those days, I didn't understand it but now I teach my students that you do not understand people without knowing history of their people. Well, we'll come to it later, but anyway, I consider it as part of the web of the personality, historic events. Those days I did not understand it this way, just liked history. Every single strut in the roadway, you know, I had to memorize. We had to, we had to decide a in High School and I was very good at it because I memorized Mickiewicz, Schen-kavitch (ph), Krasinski, these were the very famous, and later came the positivists and I was really, this was my life! It still is, reading, I'm still an addict in reading. I don't remember now because my mind doesn't work well but in those days I absorbed it all.

Q: What attracted you to the positivists?

A: It was lit, oh sure, it was after the romantics who needed a pause! Orzeszkowa, Aun-jus-kov-a (ph). The other day, they had a few months ago, they had a film festival of Polish movies and there was a marvelous, marvelous movie of Orzeszkowa, I forgot what it was, it was fantastically well done, but the positivists. And then when I came to the, this was all in High School. It's amazing, I didn't have any conflict with Poles at that point. I studied so many years in high school, we were totally isolated. We didn't experience it.

01:36:14

I didn't know, my father had some customers who were Polish, but I didn't have any contact. So, anti-Semitism was nothing that was experienced personally except that it wasn't it, but you knew it was there.

Q: Did your parents talk about it?

A: No. I knew that my father would bribe the tax accountants, when they came, the tax man. He would send them fantastic sets of porcelain for Christmas, as I remember, because of our discussion what to choose for these people, so they were bribed. He would give some of them discounts, I know, that later saved my life in strange ways. The Ukrainians were very poor. This was a Polish regime and Ukrainians were both illiterate and poor. They were peasants, they would come into store barefoot, I remember that. And they would always buy dishes which were considered very inferior, fiance (ph), ceramic. They were painted. They would buy big dishes, painted, big dishes for soup, or whatever else. But the fine porcelain was always for the Polish and for some of the Jewish families too. But my father did more than this, handling the people from the city, but from all over they came. It was an established business for the Province. And the provincial peasants were very, very many. So we got both the Ukrainian peasants would come in and the Polish people were the aristocracy, in a way. And then there were Jewish people with money. This was the clientele and there were many helpers in the store and that's where I picked up Yiddish because they spoke Yiddish to a very large extent. We had a bookkeeper who survived the war, we had my brother-in-law, my older sister's, her husband later joined and he had the presentation of chandeliers and enamel bath tubs.

Q: Enamel what?

A: Bath tubs. Tubs for the bath. This was all new because there was no way of having any, water didn't come into the apartment so you had to pour it, so the bath tubs we had for that luxury of taking a bath. And he was doing very well this way but it was part of the business. So that's where, Yiddish you could hear in the store, they spoke Yiddish, these boys. One of them survived, I met him after the war, I couldn't believe it, but, the rest were all killed. I remember seeing them over the, over in the ghetto.

01:39:01

But, I, so I was sort of isolated or protected from actual confrontation with anti-Semitism, but as I said, it was always in the air. For instance, on Yom Kipper my parents would go to synagogue, naturally, we girls stayed home. And we always barricaded ourselves. We were afraid always to stand in the window or on the balcony, the balcony was a big part of our life. We lived on the main street called Kol-soy-oi (ph), you could see people walk back and forth and my mother was very orientated towards clothes, she was critical of this, this dress is too long and this is too short and this is too bright and so on, but on Yom Kipper night, some of these nights it was forbidden for us to show our faces, this I remembered. We worried, although we never experienced it, that some of the Polish or Ukrainian goons will come and knock out windows so there was this sense of panic all the time. In our town there were so many Jews, half of the population was Jewish. You could see the difference. Suddenly it was very dark, it was very quiet, all the stores were closed, most stores belonged to the Jews. No body moved, nothing moved. And then you always thought, somebody will come, knock at the door, knock out the window, it happened occasionally but I myself did not experience this. But I do recall the feeling of some anxiety, perhaps even panic, that it might happen. So I say, I knew about it, but not in a personal way. Yom Kipper was very difficult, we all passed it, I didn't after a certain age, but Yom Kipper I remember as it was dark in the apartment. There was a very severe fast. The breaking of the fast, people were very tired or slowly coming out of synagogues, they were praying all day there. This I remember with a great deal of pain. The Klezmar would come, to pray for us, a happy, ah, these people were very poor. These are older Jews. Very poor, and they would go from house to house. It was my job, because I was the youngest at home, I didn't go to synagogue and because I was there while my parents had to come from the synagogue, to give them some food to break the fast. I remember as a child carrying that tray of honey cake. And they would pray, they would pray and then they would go, sometimes they came back later at dinner time. I still mourn these Klezmar because they were so poor. It was so

wrong that a night like that, after fast, they had to go and pray. The Klas-mas(ph) music has not survived, the type of pain when I hear, it's not good, it's not authentic enough for me.

01:42:03

I must be honest, there's very few people who remember how it was. They played in short sleeved outfits, I can't even, Perlman plays. He's doing it well I suppose but he's not good enough for me because I remember the authentic players. Who could teach these young people here, they all went to the ovens. This is the story of the Klezmar in our home town, they always played at weddings, the weddings for my family were very big, and none of them survived from what I know. Anyway, it was not right that people who have suffered so much poverty and so much indignity should ever have to end up this way. It wasn't fair. But in our home town, this was the story, this was true for many of the other little towns too, all over Poland, particularly in these places. So, this was Yom Kipper, my parents would come home, always with headaches, tired, but breaking the fast was unlike here where you often have loks or these things, or there has to be hot chicken soup and the Klezmar would come back to play and then they ate with us a little, but it was a difficult, a very difficult holiday for us. There was no joy at all. Then came Sukkot and Sukkot I remember very vividly because the Sukkot(ph) in our home was big. The entry to the apartment was a very big hallway and it didn't have windows but it had ceiling window, there was a name for it? When there's a windows in the ceiling, you know what I mean?

Q: Sky light?

A: Sky light. There was a very big room with a sky light and actually two of the other rooms, one was a children's room, also had a sky light. Anyway, the sky light in the foyer, the very big foyer was removed for Sukkot and branches of trees, it was covered with tree branches because Sukkot is a special holiday. My father would being in many people from the synagogue and they danced, everybody! By the way, every Sukkotbot, I had to bring an Oye Nak-a-dom (ph) home and Oye (ph) was a guest from the synagogue. There wasn't a time that there wouldn't come an Oye (ph),

my father had to bring an Oye (ph). Somebody who was poor, who was stranded in the city and needed a meal. A shabbat meal. Once my father came without an Oye (ph) and I remember how upset my mother was and he had, poor man, he had to go back to the synagogue and find an Oye (ph). There were always some poor people stranded. One Oye (ph) I'll never forget. It must have been 1938 by then because he told us that he came from Zbaszyn. Zbaszyn was a place, you know about it, to which the Polish Jews were thrown by the Germans and he somehow or other, he wandered and wandered around, he came to Kolomyja, a long way from Zbonsheen, which was on the Zbaszyn border and he began to tell us a little bit about what happened.

01:45:20

But I think it was hushed over in some way, at least I don't remember details. I remember that Oye (ph). Another steady one, every Sukkot-bot (ph) was the matchmaker in town. My sisters got married by matchmaker, through a matchmaker. The matchmaker, he was treated very well, but he always said, he's not going to eat, he just came for Kiddish. But, to eat you had to wash your hands so he refused to wash his hands because he only came for Kiddish. So the Kiddish was a lot of appetizers, three or four appetizers, and a lot of sweets and he was not eating, but he came, every Sukkot-bot (ph) he came because my father had daughters to marry off. And he knew there would be money there so all my sisters married _____ and when it came to me, he looked me over. The coming of age, he noticed my body, that it was getting ready for marriage. He started looking at me more seriously, but I escaped him. So I never married through a matchmaker, I married my husband, very independent wife. But the matchmaker was at our shabbat table every Saturday without eating. I always laughed because he ate about three appetizers you know. The Jewish food was gefilte fish and it was pitché and it was something else, chopped liver, three, four appetizers and he ate all of them without washing his hands, which means he didn't eat. We all laugh about it, we still remember the shabbat and they all went into the ovens. But, this was part of

my childhood which I resisted to a large extent because I wanted to be very Polish to him. Without being with Poles. Had a very mixed up mixture, but go ahead.

Q: Did you loose the little accent that you had when you first went to school, so instead of speaking Polish?

A: Yes. My Polish is fine. I lost the accent and I must have made some sort of silent determination that I'm going to beat them at it. My Polish saved my life in some ways, in some places, some occasions when somebody looked suspiciously at me and I knew he was suspecting because I look Jewish, I would open my mouth, which helped occasionally because I spoke very good Polish. Now my Polish ain't so good. But my German is better now, amazingly so. Yes.

Q: You went to University in 1936?

A: 1936 I entered University again.

Q: And how did that happen, was this usual for young women?

A: No, not at all. Very few, there was no gymnasium for Jewish women, there was only the gymnasium with the nuns, the Ursulanki nuns ran a Catholic, high school for Catholic girls and all Polish girls were Catholic.

01:48:09

So there was nothing for me but that when my parents together with nine others created the gymnasium. I came to the University, I certainly wanted to go to University and I wanted to study Polish literature, there was no question about what I wanted to study. I was the youngest at home, the only one at home. My sisters were married by then. And lived away. So for them, the lose of their mezunka, the youngest is the mezunka, usually the favorite child in many Jewish families, but with me it was doubly so. They were extremely unhappy about it, they wouldn't hear about it. Well, how could I make my parents hear me this way? I went on a hunger strike. For my parents, a child wouldn't eat, was the greatest tragedy. They could not stand my, they couldn't stand the separation from me, I suppose. They worried about a girl going away to a big city, what will

happen to her? They worried about kashrut, where will I eat there? And they worried about themselves, I'm sorry, I'm sure they couldn't face each other all alone. All the sisters were gone and they were still young people but they felt as if they felt old. So my father made a decision to go to his Rabbi. At that time the Rabbi didn't come to us anymore. He was old and he didn't travel, I suppose. He lived some where near Sigit, somewhere very far, it was Romania at that point. And to go to Romania from Poland you needed passports by then, you needed visas, you needed foreign currency, it was both the Polish government and the Romanian government made it very difficult. But my father found a way and he went to the Rabbi. To consult with him, what to do about this stubborn, little daughter. So the Rabbi, in his wisdom, I doubt if his experience was questioned, he said, if she is as smart as a boy, you treat her as if she were a boy, send her to study. Father came back and I went to study. And that is the story on how I went to study. My parents outfitted me and I was always outfitted for every occasion, and I went to live off and they made arrangements with a distant relative to house me. She was in Boughf, Lemberg. She was married to a man who didn't make a living, the name was Fisch, so there was hidden poverty, a little hidden poverty. I had a small room there, kept extremely well for me. The woman worked very hard, again, I had a lot of pain because she treated me exceptionally. I had to have the best meat and the best food and they skimped and it was very painful for me to look at all these things. But that's how it was and she was getting 100 zlotys a month, which in those days was much money, and the whole family lived off it. There was one daughter, a little younger than I. So this was what they lived off.

01:51:10

The first day, I get outfitted, my new outfit, and I go to the University and I'm small and I look very young. I look much younger than my seventeen and a half years, I looked a little childish in a way.
Q: How old were you?
A: Seventeen and a half. Close to eighteen, in fact, when the Rabbi, when he married me later he wondered whether my father was telling my age, I looked so young. But, I come to the University,

it looked so big. It looked so tremendous and here in front of the big door stand two Polish goons and Endeki, Polish Fascists. And there are big posters in front of the door saying, this is a week without Jews. This, as I remember, is October, 1936. A week without Jews, I don't understand what they're talking about, so I'm trying to get through and I see they're hostile faces. Anyway, I came to my classroom and I recall they wanted me to sit down on the left benches. The classrooms were very big, at least to the eyes of the young girl from a small town, and they arranged that all Polish students were to sit on the right side and the Jewish students were to take the ghetto benches, the left side. Before I went to them, I already had some information from the Jewish-Polish society of students, and they told me about it, and they told me Jewish students will not take the left benches, the ghetto benches, but we will stand. So I looked for the Jewish students, there was no body else, I was the only Jewish student. And to the right side were about, 200 perhaps, Polish students and I'm the little thing standing at the door. To cut it short, for the next three years, I stood at that door. I took all my University classes in the standing position. I never sat down. It was getting worse every day. There were weeks without Jews, there were special treatment of Jews. The professors were unbelievably anti-semetic. The professors stood and they could see around, they were a little high on the podium, and it was a requirement of each student to hand over the indexes, it was a little book in which you would put a signature that you had attended classes, we had to have that to attend every class in Polish literature. And as I put, and he would pause at the end of the session, he would put his signature. One of them, Professor Tasycki, he was the expert in the Polish language, not literature, but language for say, phonics. He saw my name, Matylda Hirsch, he took a look, he threw it at the floor.

01:54:00

And the students applauded. I don't know what made me go back. I just don't know. It was sheer anger, I suppose. Or sheer sukkotme of going home without finishing it. I was so defenseless. I

was in such a fright. Everyday, I would literally vomit with anxiety, of entering that University. At one point, they pushed me and they pushed me down and something I held on that I didn't break my body. One point I remember, a highlight in my University studies. Professor Julius Kleiner, may his memory be blessed. The saying was that he was half Jewish, a quarter Jewish, one-eighth Jewish, whatever it was. He was a very famous professor, an expert on the famous poet, Julius Slowacki. His name was Julius Kleiner, and it was the same, Julius and Julius. He introduced us to some understanding of the influence of Freud on literature. To me, it was all very new. But he was extremely prestigious lecturer of Polish literature, particularly about Slowacki. And he saw me, every time, standing at the doorway, all alone, as I was very insignificant little looking, very small. One day, he moves from his katedra, all the way down to the doorway, I thought he was walking out, he takes me under his arm, he brings me up to the podium and he asked me to take the chair. Well! I refused to take the chair. I just stood, he finished his lecture, as he walked down, the students threw eggs at him. Lucky they didn't throw stones. Many times, they carried stones. Most of the time, by the way, he was later killed, I believe, but I have lost contact. The Endecki would take, would carry sticks, what do you call it? Sticks? With a Gillette at the bottom of it.

Q: A razor.

A: A razor, yes. And they would always try to hurt some Jewish student. Once he killed one. This was a friend of my husband's, came later. Well, these were the days, I would get home extremely depressed. Would study in this extremely small room, which they kept very clean, special for me. I would study, my mind was everywhere else, but I still had all these papers, sometimes were very good. We had a professor of Polish phonetics, this was a woman, she was a docent, a docent meant an associate professor, docent to Professor Taszcki, so she didn't have as much power as he but she was a miserable creature, she looked like a monkey. She was horrible in every way and she focused on me. And she focused on my podzigbienie.

which means, old church Slavonic. The old church Slavonic, she wanted to test it in some way and she made experiments. Only years later did I realize that these were experiments taken out of racial books, but I wasn't aware of it. She put powder on our, what do you call that part? Of the most

podzigbienie, I'm saying it in Polish, podzigbienie, and she would have us pronounce vocals. And she wanted to study it and photograph, all were experiments, which I couldn't understand, but she wanted to tell us how we pronounce this vowel, how we pronounce, what is the other, the consonant. This was all taken of Nazi books, which occurred to me only many years later. This was Professor Dluga was her name. Terrible creature! And who does she play with? The one Jewish student, that was me.

Tape II

02:01:06

Q: Maria, we were talking about the three, it was three years, in Lvov, four years before you graduated?

A: It was four years, but the fourth year the Russians were there and the University has changed totally by then.

Q: Let me ask you a little bit about the three years. What gave you the strength to go to school, I mean, talking about throwing up everyday before you go, I mean, was extraordinary stress!

A: I did not throw up everyday but I felt nauseous and I threw up occasionally, but the nausea was part of the anxiety. I felt some sense of resistance, that I cannot leave. The Jewish organization helped us to a large extent because I knew this was happening to other students too. The thing that mobilized my anger rather than my anxiety was a funeral of a student in the medical studies. He was literally killed in the classroom. His name just escapes me, I wish I could remember, but he was a close friend of a man who later became my husband. This was a tremendous funeral, somewhere or other, I felt this solidarity of people and I wasn't alone. It was very unfortunate that in the study of Polish literature I was the only Jew and that feeling of isolation was the worst part of all of it. But then, I suddenly found myself in that procession of hundreds of students and I got this sense of strength from the numbers. But it was extremely difficult and I always prayed that the class be over and vacation come, each time there was a holiday, naturally I would go home. My

parents were overjoyed in seeing me, I never told them the story of what was going on. I recall, they would bring back the big, big pots and pans when I came because for themselves, they were on diets, and the cooking was very limited, so when I came there were again celebrations. There was some joy in the house again. I think it was in my, let me see, it was in my third year of studies, second or third, I can't remember, that I went to the library to pick up a Polish book and the librarian told me that the book was just checked out. I said, who took it? She said, this man, this young student. I walk over to the student and I say, I need this book. He says, he wants to read it too. And I said, are you a student of Polish literature? He say, no, he studies pharmacology, the medical school. So I said, but I'm a student of Polish literature and I need the book for an exam. He says, well, you're quite stubborn about it. I say, yes, please help me with it. We started talking. He was from my home town, I never knew him, but I knew of his parents because people knew of the businesses.

02:04:03

His parents had a apotheketer (ph), pharmacy and everybody knew the pharmacy and I did. So he was one of their sons, the youngest son. Well, arguing over the book, we became lovers. And this changed my life immediately. I wasn't alone. Nunek and I were going home, at least for vacations, my father was very unhappy when I declared I wanted to marry him. Because his family, unlike my own, was extremely assimilated to the extent that I think they would eat on Yom Kippur, which was unusual. They carried it to an extreme. His father was for generations, they had that pharmacy. They prided themselves in being extremely assimilated Jews. Well again, in my usual stubbornness, my parents had to give in, so my father remembered that as a very young child, he went to the chedet together with this man who had a few classes there, so they patched it up in some way and they came and there was an engagement. It was 1938 or 1939. We became engaged and my life naturally changed because I wasn't alone, he was just about to finish his study, I had another two years to go. That summer..

Q: Tell me when you met?

A: I met him, I think it was 1938, two years after.

Q: Was he your first man?

A: My first boyfriend. Well, I had some boyfriends before. My first crush was on the teacher, then I had a boy that, my parents arranged for me to meet boys in their house, which means dancing, so it was always chaperoned. And I remember a crush on a young man who was later killed. And this was my first crush, but my first intimate relationship was this boy, my fiancee, Nunek Najder. It wasn't engaged really, we started living together in a way, yes.

Q: What attracted you to him, do you think?

A: He loved Polish literature and yet he was in a different profession, so definitely yes, he was very assimilated and I always struggled with this thing, you know? We had a lot in common because of Polish literature. And we belonged to the Jewish Student Association, life changed. I wasn't alone. And I think, my later years, being alone was a real tragedy. When I was hiding, later. But, Nunek was extremely affectionate with me, extremely devoted to me. We just seemed to be the right kind of a couple, both young, he was two years older than I. We would go home for vacations and there were always celebrations about it.

02:07:03

One day, for a long vacation one summer we decided to go into the wild mountains. I was very much into hiking. Until a few years ago I was into it. And he too. This was the major sport for many young, Jewish people. He didn't belong to an organization, he was the assimilated sort of category of Jews. But when he saw what was happening in the University, he became extremely angry at those Poles. But one day we decided to go to a new, brand new hostel on one of the highest mountains on the Carpatian Mountains, this was called the Chomiak. It was just discovered recently and they built a hostel there. Hard to get there, after a point we were able to go by a car, later had the march and was very far away. It was brand new, it smelled delicious I remember, there

was one more couple from Warsaw, Polish people. And I recall the distance we had from them and, we were the only four people, very far away. No body could get there. I do recall that they had a sort of sense of superiority over us. They knew immediately that we were Jewish, although I looked Jewish, my husband never did and he spoke Polish beautifully. He came from a family of long, of long history of assimilated Jews. But somehow or the other, they sensed it. So although we ate together, there was a sense of distance and there was our sense of looking up at them. This I still remember. Well, it was a great experience, to be all alone in this stunning part of the mountains, this is above Bor-auk-na (ph), Bor-auk-na (ph) was a village and from there we went to the Chomiak. Later on, Chomiak became a popular place. When the vacation was over, it was the 1st of September, 1939. Vacation was over, we went back to the village to take the train to Kolomyja. It was a Sunday afternoon, we saw many, no, don't remember why I think it was a Sunday, I thought it was Sunday because many Ukrainian peasants were trying to read posters. When we came to the posters, it was a Declaration of War. That Germany has just declared war on Poland. It was September 1st, 1939. Shows you how totally unprepared we were for it. People lived in Warsaw, not the cities, knew much more. We seemed to have been totally isolated from it, particularly when we were up in the mountains there for many weeks.

Q: Were you aware of what was going on in Germany?

A: We knew a little, what was going on in Germany, it was Nazi Germany. We didn't know how much impact they had on our, on Polish students.

02:10:01

Actually, when I later studied it, the tactics of the Polish students were cut out of text books from the Nazi literature. We didn't know enough. When you lived in the western part of Poland you certainly knew more about it. You didn't, I didn't, and my husband didn't know either. But I recall that day, later in the afternoon, I don't know why I think it was Sunday, the only reason that I think so is that when peasants just be all together in the center of the square. We read this, we didn't

really realize the importance of it. We were Polish patriots, strangely enough. Both of us had military preparation, I had it in my high school days. All boys and all girls had to have military preparation. Which meant we were taught how to wear uniforms, how to march. He had to be taught, I'm sure, how to shoot. I wasn't, but to march in parades and to march in case of a war. We knew all these things, there was, forgot the name, Polskin, gosh how could I remember, forget these names, anyway it was war preparation, that every high school student had to participate in. We took the train and we thought perhaps we'll go into the war, perhaps we'll march, we just didn't understand any of it. When I came home I saw the gloom on my parents face, they knew more. They had participated in World War I and they knew that war is not only songs and marches. This was September 1st, 1939. Within weeks, the Russian army moved in. I didn't know then, but there was a pact between Ribintrope (ph) and Molotov (ph) and they declared that Poland should be divided. Our part of Poland fell to the Soviets. This was within two or three weeks that the Soviet army marched in. I remember the night when they marched in. It was very, what was the word for it? The song sounded very attractive, it was mesmerizing. They were marching and their songs were beautiful, I still remember their songs. And I was very much pulled somewhat or other, I always was liberal, I was always poor. Many of their ideas, it seemed that, they were bring some employment and dignity to the poor people. But, on the other hand, I could see from my parents expression that they were worried and we didn't know what the future would be, so it was strong. I remember distinctly that night when they marched in and I recall the song, they sang these songs, for some reason. Well, we went back to Lvov to study. My husband was just finished then, I think.

02:13:05

Q: Can you sing one of the songs?

A: Gosh, [singing], oh, I can't remember anymore. If tomorrow is war, we will defend Stalin and everywhere we will be the victors. So, it had a mesmerizing quality for some reason because I was in conflict. But I did go back to finish my studies. The University was totally different by then. By the way, I was married by, this was 1940, I was just married by then. Well, come back to my wedding for a minute, it was already a very quiet wedding. I never wanted a wedding in a white gown, I was a very feminist kind of a woman, liberal kind of a women. I was not interested in all these trappings of the bourgeoisie, which was very much the bad and good part of my background, mainly through my mother.

02:14:02

So I always dreamed that I'll just escape with my husband or I'll have a very small wedding, but anyway when the time came it was, the Soviets had just come in at that point and I was married, I can't remember the month which is insane, but I know it was 1940. It was the year when I was just about to graduate. The Rabbi of our town was a close friend of my father, Rabbi Lowe (ph). His nephew is the chief Rabbi of Israel now. The other nephew was chief counsel of Israel for New York, the United States, I knew both of them, I met them later. But that Rabbi questioned my father, he said, you say she's of age to marry? She looks like a child. I just happened to look very young. So the outfit for my wedding was a nice little navy suit and flat-heel shoes and a little veil, I think. The wedding was in our own apartment in our parents home. There were hardly any guests, the Soviets had just come in and the business was already taken over by the Soviets. My father kept saying that he cannot give me much a dowry because of the war, because the Soviets have taken over everything, but after the war he will reimburse me for it, I'll get more dowry than any of the other girls, and all the girls got good dowries. And I didn't think of a dowry at all, to me this was all very uninteresting. All I remember that, the day of the wedding, later we took the train and went back to study and, in Re-volf (ph), and sitting on the train I wore that wedding band and he did too and a Polish woman sits there across from us, she says, these days children have such a way of

lying. You wear wedding bands, you're both children! He looked very young too, strange as it all sounds now. But we finished our studies and the University was a totally different institutions. The Soviets have changed it totally. While anti-Semitism was somewhat there, it certainly was there, it was not official but there are no more Jewish students in my department. I mean, there was no question in what I mixed with others. What I recall was extremely cold winter of 1940. The Soviets suddenly did not have any steam anymore, everything was just taken away, including the steam, how they managed that I don't know. But whatever they could put their eyes on was taken back to Russia. I recall going to the opera house, we were involved in opera, and seeing the Russian ladies in nightgowns because they thought these were evening gowns, and I recall in our, when they took our store they removed everything so my father still removed some dishes for bartering later which helped us for a long time. The Soviets nationalized the store, actually local people who became communist, who were communist, but now became very important officials, they came to help the Soviet soldiers to nationalize the store. For my father it was a terrible tragedy because to him the business was his life to a very large extent and suddenly he was without anything. The same happened to my father-in-law, his _____ was also nationalized by the Soviets. To these people, they suddenly became old, and they were really not older at that point but everything was taken away from them, they felt. So, the study was very different. I had my final exams, they had to be in the Russian language. We all had to study from the green book, I remember under my arm, and every student had it under their arm, every University student has this green book. Very cheap paper in green cover, it was called the korr-up-tik qual for Bolshovitski Party (ph), which means The Short Course of the Bolshevik Party and was full of propaganda which I didn't realize at that time that it was propaganda, but it was about Stalin and it was about the Revolution. One chapter I liked very much was the Marxist dialectic philosophy, it was very well written. It seemed to have some, no, actually the Hagalien (ph) dialectic philosophy, it made sense. It had some large expressions to be a lot of propaganda. But we had to study every page and every word of it and the final exam, when they examined me in Polish literature, I had to talk in Russian. I mastered the language very quickly. I forgot it very quickly too, you know I hardly know any. But this was a

year in Re-volf (ph), the final year. I was a newly wedded woman, my parents were depressed over what happened, what was going on, they were forever feared that they may be deported, that the Russians would deport them. At one point, they actually would go home from time to time, at one point they came to take my parents away. They always did it in the middle of the night. They were classified as bourgeois and this was a very bad certification and, in the middle of the night they came always with their rifles, rifling at the door. We always were afraid. And they took them to the railway station to take them to Siberia. I recall I was home at that point and my sisters was home at that point, and we ran to the railway station. It was a lot of bribes to get them back home. I wish we didn't, but that's what happened. The bribes were always vodka and chof-socks (ph). Chof-socks (ph) were watches, they loved watches. The Soviets had absolutely nothing, it's unbelievable, how they took everything, taken back to Russia. For the first time they saw goods, which they haven't seen. We didn't realize how the revolution had changed life there in those politics in poverty, unless among the highest officials, I suppose. So, they always ordered leather coats and when they ordered leather coats, they had to be to the floor because they figured when they go back and the winter is cold, they will cut and make a pair of boots, this was _____. So, chof-socks (ph) and leather coats and our fine porcelain, all of it went somewhere with the Russian families eventually back to Russia. This was the Soviets, but I finished school and then they didn't permit me to live in Re-volf (ph), didn't permit me or my husband, because we were categorize as bourgeois. And the Soviet law was that if you were in this category, you weren't quite an animal in Socialism but you were somewhere not to be trusted so you had to live fifty miles away from a large city. Everybody wanted to live in a large city, so they punished us. Instead of taking us to Siberia like they wanted to take my parents, who were considered useless, they figured two young people, these professionals, will be useful. So the law was that you had to move fifty miles away from Re-volf (ph) and there were these centers. They had a very bright idea, good idea, is to open up hospitals and pharmacies in the villages of the Polish Ukraine, which had nothing. There was never a school there, never a hospital, never a pharmacy, and the Soviets had a network of these things, very smart, the Poles never give them any credit for it. But they did, so they opened up a hospital in

a place called Glen-na-novaria (ph). You never heard of it, I never heard of it. It was a real loss, it was a village in where there was no sidewalk. When a train, your shoe got stuck right in the mud. It had a name, mud was a part of the name, so this is where they sent us to work. My husband, they wanted to open a pharmacy, how did they open a pharmacy? They took from the Russian church, from the parochial house, they took the house and they opened a pharmacy. My husband opened the pharmacy and me, they wanted to teach in school and, because I wasn't prepared to teach young children, I was prepared to teach at gymnasium, I had a Masters Degree by then, my gis-trof-o-sovisia (ph) which was a high Degree. So I was not versed in high school or anything, so they said I could be an assistant to my husband. I learned how to make ca-go-cheekie (ph), was a little medication against headaches. And I would wrap it. Very often at night we heard them, heard the Soviet soldiers knock at the door with the rifle. Each time we were prepared they would take us to Siberia. What they wanted were condoms. In the middle of the night, they would rifle at the door for condoms. This was 1940. I thought we were lucky to have jobs, we had enough food. There were three Jewish families, us, a Jewish doctor from Germany who was somehow or other came there and opened a hospital, it was all public works, and a Jewish teacher from Ha-riza (ph). That's where all your Ukrainian peasants, everybody was illiterate there, absolutely illiterate. So the three of us, sometimes they played cards, I was reading books always, but anyway, one day we went to vacation and my father, you know, was so desperate about once more to stand behind a pharmacy counter. Once more to be an upper taker. So with a great deal of difficulty, we arranged for him to come to our place in Glen-na-novaria (ph) for two weeks vacation and we would go to their home in Kolomyja. It took us a lot of work to arrange that exchange. Well, it happened. We went there, home, we stayed in their home for two weeks and my father and mother-in-law went to our little place and took over the pharmacy to the greatest joy for this old man. And we were suppose to, after two weeks vacations we were suppose to go back. And it was the 21st of June, 1941, and you know the rest of the story. We didn't expect any of it. We said good-bye to my parents, we had railway tickets to go the next day back to Re-volf (ph) and from there by horse and carriage to go to Glen-na-novaria (ph) and, in the middle of the night, I hear a lot of noise. I look out of the window,

it was one in the morning, I see Soviet women and children being put on trucks. I woke my husband, I say, they must be going to summer camps. But it seemed to be so noisy and so many trucks, middle of the night. I opened the radio and here Hitler's voice comes across. Today I declared war on Bolshevism and the Jews. And I knew things were very bad. The first thing in the morning, we ran to the railway station to get to that place. The trains did not run anymore. Nothing for civilians. We were stuck in Kolomyja, his parents were stuck in that little hole. Two weeks later we got a card, they were both shot. The Germans walked into the pharmacy, they were renounced as Jews and they were shot. This was the end of my husband's parents. We were stuck in Kolomyja and first the Hungarians came to cover our city. I remember them wearing these very high hats with feathers. They didn't do much harm at that point yet. Somehow or other I recall a truck of children, a truck with children. I had no idea who these children were, but the children, the truck was covered but you could hear cries. We were living then at the home of my parents and I remember my father said to me and my sister, my sister had run away from Nova-som (ph), from the western part where the Germans had been already for two years, she came to our home town. And the Russians first were looking for her to send her to Siberia but anyway she got out of it and the Hungarians were there and my father said, bring the children a little hot water, it was a cold day. So we run with a china of hot water and we hear the whimper of the children and suddenly shots come. They were directed at us, at my sister and myself. I remember we threw this hot water, the china, on the sidewalk. This was my first confrontation with real terror. But the Hungarians by and way were pretty innocent at the beginning, a least we didn't know. Within a few weeks, the Germans marched in. And now I know from history but those days I didn't know that right in the back of the soldiers came the SS. They always were out and we didn't know the difference between an SS and a soldier and everything has been blamed on the SS but I now know that the soldiers were indistinguisukkotble from the SS because they participated as much. But anyway, everyday there was a new directive, a new poster. Today the Jews have to register and tonight the Jews have to observe curfew, and then Jews had to deliver all the gold and silver and then Jews have to deliver all the fur coats. And I remember standing in a long, long line on a very cold day, shivering and

delivering fur coats. When I got married my parents bartered some of their porcelain things with a furrier who made two fur coats for me, not one but two, during the last year of my studies. It helped immensely because the University was so cold and I recall taking classes everyday bundled up in that fur coat. Anyway, with these two fur coats I stood in line, we all stood in line to deliver to the Germans. And I recall coming to the window, the German official, and he would register my name and address and the fur coat, the length of the fur coat, what it was made of. One was a tweed lined with beaver, the other was a sealskin coat, and he gave me a receipt of it and I figured, well, if after the Winter passes I'll get it back, whatever. My ivory tables endless. And then came the ax-e-on-a (ph), the activists. All these names, we didn't know, we called them ax-e-on-a (ph) because the Germans called it ax-e-on-a (ph). The raids. There was not a ghetto yet. I remember in the beginning, one of the raids was suddenly we saw people being dragged with ropes around their bodies. This was the action against the intellectuals, the doctors. We knew the Jewish doctor so well. This was a diversion, when sometime in 1940 when the Soviets were there, I was an assured vacation, Passover vacation at home. We were married then and my husband left at 6:00 in the morning I was suppose to take a later train, I do not remember why. I leaned out of the window, this was 1940 in Kolomyja and it was a sukkotrp, cool morning and I felt a terrible pain in my breast, in my lungs, my chest. And within a few hours, the doctors were there and they told me I have pneumonia, double pneumonia. In those days there was no treatment for pneumonia. My husband came back immediately, my father-in-law who still knew a lot about _____, anyway, they got together. Sulfur was a way of treatment, but the medical knowledge at that point was if you lived seven days, I was pretty much unconscious with an extremely high fever, if you lived seven days, if you lived through the seven days you survive, otherwise you die at the seventh day. So they put cups, what they called cups, glass cups on my chest, which I hated, but worse, they brought leeches. And the leeches were always used medicinally by a barber, I don't know why. The barber has a jar of leeches. I can't remember, half conscious as I was, I kept sukkotking my head, I don't want leeches but he put leeches. And whether the hot cups or the leeches or my father's prayers, whichever it was I woke up saying, I'm hungry, and this was the end of my

pneumonia. Almost the whole town was involved in my pneumonia. The three doctors were day and night and at my bed. Their names I do remember, Dr. Tye-sukkot (ph), Dr. Fry-gar (ph) and Dr. Fleish (ph), all three of them. When I got well, and I recovered pretty quickly I was young, and my mother took good care of me, I recovered, they insisted that the town should see me. They took a fee-ak-a (ph), and-drosh-kind (ph) and a pair of horses and here were the three doctors with me and we traveled across the city so everybody knew I was truly alive. In those days, you didn't pick up a phone [to call anyone]. _____ because I would like the names of these doctors to be remembered somehow or another, they were all killed. Dr. Fleish's (ph) daughter went to school with me, gymnasium, is still alive in Stockholm. So coming back to the German times, this I remember, famous doctors were in that aux-own-der (ph) being dragged. We didn't know where people were being dragged, there were all kinds of rumors. Later we found they went, dragged outside of town to a forest called Sukkotp-a-roth-sa (ph) and they were shot there. They had machine guns there. There were all kinds of rumors that they went somewhere but somewhere or other it began to bother us that perhaps really the rumors that they were killed were true. We didn't quite want to believe it. Every few weeks there was another action. One a very sad one was a moc-row-seat (ph), a very poor neighborhood where they dragged out all the Jews and for some reason they focused on them and then there were, food was already beginning to be rationed, there was little food. And in 1942, it was Passover, 1942, when the posters on the wall announced that all Jews have to go to the ghetto.

Q: Can I ask you a little bit about part of this period?

A: Yes.

Q: First of all, you couldn't go back to where you were living. Did you live with your parents?

A: I lived with, we stayed with my parents. We occasionally stayed with his parents when the Germans came in. But we mainly stayed with my parents. My oldest sister, _____ was also, she had her own apartment, she and her husband and Menek lived there. We stayed with my parents at a big place. Occasionally we stayed with the Knight-ess (ph). This was the beginning when the Germans came and, go ahead.

Q: Did you talk together about what happening or whether?

A: Yes, we were very, very worried. We could see what was going on. We began to, well, we never saw that all be killed, this was very hard. Some of us would disappear, we thought, the way they did. People talked about the fact that these Jews were taken to the Ukraine, to the west-eastern part of the Ukraine to work on farms and we latched on to these stories, we really wanted to believe that. Under no circumstances did we think that it would lead to gas chambers. We had no idea, when you read the memos today and they said, we knew they were going to Treblinka, they knew they were going, we didn't know where they were going, it was a fact. But there were massive raids on people. And sometimes there was shooting right in front of us so we knew that things were terribly bad. And there was beginning to be massive starvation. People were going hungry, but there was always somebody who disappeared. You heard somebody, a cousin, an uncle, somebody just, just, he was taken away. The word, the expression was taken away and many survivors still talk this way because we really didn't know the word, we don't know where they were killed, most of the time we don't know exactly when because taken away is the right expression for it because all we knew is we saw them disappear, being taken away. The Ukrainians were extremely involved with the Germans. Actually, they were shooting as much, they were rounding us up as much. But the round ups, called ax-see-on (ph), were the most characteristic part of that period. You were afraid of ax-see-on (ph) and you were beginning to think about hiding places. It never occurred to us that we would disperse among the native population. We just didn't think of it. Everybody knew me, I'm Maria Heirsh from Kolomyja, where would I go? Then came the arm bands, the white arm bands we had to wear. The yellow stars we had to wear. The names that we had to take, the identity cards that came, the cam-carda (ph). Where with my name was Sarah, the man, I can't remember the name for the man, there was another Jewish name, biblical name for man, which means we were identified this way. You couldn't move without a cam-carda (ph), you couldn't be out, you couldn't be in the street after 6:00, you couldn't walk on the sidewalks, everyday there were new restrictions of various serious natures. There was a you-den-rot (ph) established, they asked my father to serve but he didn't want to serve, the chairman of the you-den-rot (ph) was a Mr.

Horowitz. A Jewish police was established, my husband's brother volunteered for it because you first thought you would save Jews, later he was involved in all kinds, I assume of horrible things, although he didn't witness them. It was getting worse everyday. We didn't know what a ghetto was. By the way, when the Soviets withdrew and the Germans were just about to come in my father in strange ways looked forward to it. He remembered the Austrians and he thought the Germans would be part of it. With the Russians he couldn't communicate, they took away everything from him. It was the Germans he favored since he speaks German and he remembers this. Austria the whole while was for them the best part of their lives. Hammsburg, Austria - the Kaiser was good to them. I remember as a child when the picture of Kaiser Franz Joseph came down in our living room and they hung up the picture of Marsukkotll Pil-sook-ski (ph) and I was happy about it. And they did it for their children, I think. But they were very much attached to the German language, to the Austrians, so they didn't think that the Germans could be so bad because they really didn't know terribly much what was going on in Germany. And in Germany they didn't have extermination camps, people immigrated. We knew someone from Bonn-sheen (ph) but our knowledge was limited. The Soviets kept the knowledge away to a very large extent too. They didn't tell us what was going on in western Poland because then they already had some camps. They didn't tell, the Russians kept it very sealed, very tightly. Any news from western Germany where many Jews lived. Some of them escaped during the Soviet period like my sister did, my sister Frania.

Q: When the Germans came in and started the ax-see-on (ph) and you saw things on the street, even though you didn't think it would be exterminations because who if any could have thought of that, did you see certain groups or certain people or were men more vulnerable than women did you think, or were they going to be the target?

A: It was mixed, first were men which reinforced our false beliefs that they were taken to work. Men, to a large extent. But there was special categories taken. At one point I saw the doctors, then came some of the lawyers, fathers of students with whom I went to school, one of them lives in California still, one is in Florida, they both were there. Their fathers were lawyers. Then it came for some workers, special workers, we were told the SS needs these workers. But you could see

sometimes shooting in the streets. Oh, the children came much later and this was a real awakening at that point. But, there were food limitations, severe food limitations. We were beginning to be quite hungry, not starved yet, but hungry. I remember the first day of Passover, this is in my mind very much, 1942. There was an announcement that we all had to go to the ghetto and they established three ghettos and they assigned to us the very poor part of the city. We were permitted to take on carriages, I don't know why they permitted some of these carriages still, permitted to take whatever we could in carriages. I remember I took a pillow, we took some dishes, a few potatoes, that's all we had. And we settled in that one-room house at the end of the town, it seemed to me, a very extremely poor neighborhood. It was pretty dark, it was the first _____ at night. It must have been five o'clock in the afternoon, was still enough time to prepare something for dinner. I recall peeling potatoes, the potatoes I saved. And suddenly I felt smoke and I looked around and the ghetto was on fire. And we began to run. We saw people being shot, we saw houses on fire including our own. We began to run, we didn't know where to run, people are running we are running with them. They were running to the other part of the ghetto. In the other part of the ghetto lived my sister Frania and her husband and their child. My husband stayed behind, he wanted to just catch something, still save something. As we came there he arrived a few hours later, I remember, and his eyebrows were all burned and he came with a half-burned chicken. He caught a chicken in order to feel us. It was terribly bad but we left, we were alive. And each time these things happen, we touched ourselves and touched each other. We are alive. This was Passover. I went to my sister's place, she had a small place there. We all crowded in there, whatever food they had we ate it together. We later found that many people from that part, whom they caught, they took them away and that's all we knew, they took them away. And most of the time they took them to sukkotp-a-rof-ska (ph) and sometimes in the distance you could hear this shooting. Still, it would be somebody they perhaps shot, they obviously must have taken for work, by then they took all of the children and families, whole families. This was the ax-see-on (ph) of Passover. Later on, we found out, and dreaded holidays, we knew they were always were around holidays. Was easy for them to drag all the Jews. Finally we got a little apartment assigned to us in that other part of the

ghetto. One, your windows of that went to the air outside, but the inside of it was the ghetto. Very small and my husband and I got an extremely small, it was a little porch and my parents got another one in that building. Things were getting worse everyday. I recall getting up in the morning and looking at the panorama of the ghetto, what it was like. People were laying, some dead of typhoid fever or starvation. An older Jew with a little carriage and a horse, which we later named the Messiah horse, would take these bodies on, put these dead bodies on that little carriage and drive them out of town for burial. We called the horse the Messiah horse because it was the horse of liberation. By then we felt that dying, what you call of natural death, was a blessing. Some of my uncles had this death. I recall these bodies in the littered ghetto, they were littering the ghetto. I recall sometimes getting up the morning and seeing distorted faces hanging on the street lanterns. And these distorted faces sometimes I saw the face of a teacher, of a relative, of a stranger. This was the work of the SS or the common soldiers who knew where and what. At night they would raid the ghetto, they would come in for a sport kind of thing, and would just find a few Jews and hang them on the street lanterns. This I couldn't understand. This jolted me. I could understand they would take away people because they need people to work in the factories, on the farms. Why did they hang these teachers of mine? By then I was pretty much fully aware of the tragedy, of the whole tragedy of it. Then came a tremendous ax-see-on (ph). This was in September, 1942. There were little ones in between. There was an announcement that all men have to report to the auto-bites-on (ph), that they have to take along some food and then they will be sent to the Ukraine for work. By then we were sophisticated enough not to trust them. Only men, not women. We figured still, if they want men only it must be for work, but on the other hand, everybody to register. There were thousands of Jews in the ghetto. By the way, our ghetto became augmented because the Jews from the providence's like your friends Alice Shick-ee (ph), Kos-off (ph), Kou-tee (ph), Uram-sukkot (ph), all these places were bringing, the Jews were brought into my home town, in the ghetto, were all herded into the ghetto so the overcrowding was unbelievable. That all of them, all men had to register, we knew this much, every man in the ghetto. Well, I remember that dilemma that evening before. Who should go? The man in my family was my father, my husband, my two

brothers-in-law, Frania's husband and Cyla's husband. Menek was too young to be, they unified in that Menek wouldn't go. We decided our father shouldn't go because we were afraid that he wouldn't be taken to work. I recall this very sad day, he came in and I couldn't recognize him. He took off his beard, he sukkotved his beard to look younger and he looked horrible. He was beyond recognition because my father, you see his photo, was a very handsome man and the beard was part of the handsomeness. And he looked about 100 years older but he decided he wanted to go. My husband we thought would be safe because he was permitted while in the ghetto, he was permitted to work outside of the ghetto in his pharmacy. They didn't know it to operate it so he had a Red Cross on part of his work clothes band, on part of his white band, he was permitted to go during the day so the Germans could have access to the pharmacy, but in the evening he had to come back to the ghetto. Each evening, he was checked, he was trying to smuggle a little food for us, but each evening he was checked. One day he was beaten up terribly because he tried to bring a few grains of rye, he had put them into his collar of his coat and they found it and they beat him up mercilessly. But basically he was our contact with the outside world to some extent because he worked there and we decided to, he would be safe. There was no question, they're not going to take him because him they needed. The man decided to go, I don't know what made for the decision, probably there was still some sort of hope that they would go for work or something, and that, how could they hide? We had a hiding place in that place. My husband really installed us there, before he went, he put my mother, my sister Cyla who then had typhoid fever, her son, Menek, my other sister on the other side, me and Blancka Rosenberg. He put us into that cellar downstairs and he covered the opening of the floor with a little rug, put a table on top of it and _____ was sitting then that day. I'll never forget that day, it was a horrible day. The men were gone. We hoped they would return, we worried about our father mainly because he was older and we worried about him more than the others. We thought they would return or go to work somewhere. Sitting there waiting, there were a few other families there, and Blanca's child wasn't there anymore, I don't believe so, no. She was alone. And suddenly we hear some footsteps on top of that hiding place, with dogs. And boots, German boots. And the dogs stopped and started smelling and we knew this was the end. I still

don't know what happened that they walked away. Something distracted them, perhaps they didn't trust the dogs enough. I do recall that moment when everybody stopped breathing. It must have been a second but it felt like eternity. And how the mouths of these babies were covered with pillows and I was sure the babies would suffocate. They didn't, it was a moment. By then we knew that our days are counted, that they meant us too, not only the men. We were sitting there for hours, I say it felt like eternity, and suddenly we felt smoke. The house was burning, they set the house to fire. We decided we have to go up. We walked out, our house was not on fire for some reason. The neighboring houses were made of wood, our house was not as made. So, there was smoke all over. The Germans seemed to have been at the end of their day. There were dead bodies all over. We could still hear some shooting. The Ukrainians were walking into the apartments, taking out everything they could. Polish guns, Ukrainian guns. We were alive, our men were not there. I remember the moment my sister, Frania with her baby, with her child, she had typhoid fever. Somehow or other, late evening, the men come back. Who came back? Unbelievably, my father came back and my husband came back. The husbands of my sisters did not come back. We didn't know what happened to them. We comforted each other. They were sending the Ukraine's to work. The young men will be given food, they will be laborers. We didn't quite believe it, a part of us believed, another part didn't. We didn't know where they were going. All the stories that survivors say they knew, we didn't know, nobody knew. We found out later through an escapee that they went to Belzec, the extermination camp at Belzec which was not far from Re-vof (ph) and which eventually swallowed so many of the Jews from our town and from the neighboring towns. And I've read a passage about it in the book by Hillberk and I found a long chapter about it many years ago in the book of the American historian called Oln-ingst Pol-ece fie (ph). What was his name?

Q: Browning.

A: Christopher Browning. He has a whole chapter on that deportation day but I want to mix it in right now because I like to remember what I remember because this was all later. We had no idea. For many of us after the war, we didn't know that they, where they were killed. We found out this

much, much later. But there they were taken, that is where they were taken, they were taken to the extermination camp. This was the first time that we knew, we didn't know exactly, but some witnesses came back. Some people escaped from the train and they were telling us. These were gas chambers, but he didn't know because he escaped. This came, this was later and I'm trying very careful to disassociate these two sources of information, what we knew then and what we knew later. But this is what swallowed my two brothers-in-law. Menek's father and Alex's father, both young men, one was only 29, the other I believe was 32. I always thought, how did they shove these young men into gas chambers, but they did. We never saw them again. My sister Frania was then, was very high, typhoid fever, and she kept the baby next to her body and he was not infected, nobody understands how this happened. We were all starved, we were hungry. After that ax-see-on (ph) the Germans arranged for us to have a soup kitchen. It's reviewed in the Reich. There were still thousands of Jews left, they were still being brought in from the provincial towns. There seemed always to be more Jews. Later I found out that on that day 8,000 Jews were removed but there were more. I think they wanted to appease us, they wanted to appease us by making sure we will not hide, that there is still some life going on. And actually after every ax-see-on (ph) which, after this extreme tension, this extreme pain, this extreme depression, a depression hung over the ghetto for hours. After that you somehow recovered. You got up in the morning and looked out, it was quiet, you went back to whatever you were trying to do, a little cooking, whatever. By then it was potato peels. You went back to pray. You went back to whatever work. I worked in a factory where Blancka worked, in a tre-po-tosh (ph) factory, they were making uniforms for the German soldiers. Going out of the ghetto was permitted with a special permission. Each evening we have to come back. Jews were still permitted to go out to these work places, they always had to come back. After each raid, after each ax-see-on (ph) there were days that you couldn't talk to each other. You checked out who was still alive but then there was some normalcy. Normalcy of life. Amazing, but it was there. People tried to go back. I think the soup kitchen, which they introduced so late through the yood-en-rod (ph) was a way of appeasing us, of making sure we would not be afraid to leave our homes, which would make their work easier, but these are hindsight. We didn't know

what happened then. All we knew, the yood-en-rod (ph) asked my father, it was so important to make sure that everybody would get the right kind of portions, that soup, so they asked my father to supervise that soup kitchen, to stand to dish out that. He was too weak by then, he just didn't want the job. His legs were swollen. He asked them whether they would permit his youngest daughter to do it and they did and so it was my job. This I'll never forget again. Originally to, they gave us some horse meat. They made hamburgers of horse meat, they put in some horse meat in the ghetto. The women there were making this into hamburgers. It took me a long time to get use to eating it. But soup, and I remember the long, long lines of Jews. Sometimes I would recognize relatives, sometimes recognize the teachers, sometimes I recognize the father of another student. They didn't look like human beings, the way they shuffled their feet, the way they asked and the pleading tone, ged-dak (ph), ged-dak (ph) means sick. The soup was, had a little vegetables but it was watered, there was a little bit, a few beans, a few other vegetables and everybody wanted to ged-dak (ph). It was my job to be fair about it and to make sure everybody would get their right amount of food. This lasted perhaps two weeks. One day, it was close to this slaughter house in which was a Jewish slaughter house in which chicken were always killed. There was a scream and I figured what are the Germans bring, chicken, they are killing the chicken? A few hours later they found they slaughtered in this slaughter house, they slaughtered our children. This was the end of the supplication, this was the end of me, this was just the end of me. I ran home. Couldn't talk. I couldn't tell anybody what I heard. The rumor came later and everybody heard it. This was the end of my soup kitchen standing, I think it was the end of the total soup kitchen. The soup kitchen, the people stay with me, the people who looked like sukkotdows of their earlier selves. These people who were begging, ged-dak (ph). I wish they wouldn't be forgotten. This was the ghetto. I would like for a break, thank you.

End of Tape 1

Tape 2

Q: Maria, when you came back from that horrendous experience, I mean, both the soup kitchen and then listening to the children, the people being slaughtered. You said you came back and you didn't, to the house, and you didn't tell anyone. How were you able to keep it inside and, or not show anything, or?

A: I remember, I threw myself on the bed. We had a very small place, one room. I threw myself on the bed and I sobbed and sobbed for hours. And then I went, and then my husband came in and I think we began to talk, and then the news was all over. The city knew by then, the ghetto, but immediately I just couldn't put into words, I couldn't talk, I didn't, I didn't realize the extent of it. I remember it was chronological I'm not sure that I remember exactly when it happened, but sometime in 1942, all of these things were towards the end of 1942. A woman came to our apartment, to this small apartment that my husband and I stayed, and I recall she fell on her knees pleading with him to give her something. I cannot remember whether he did or didn't, I didn't understand what this was all about. I found out later that she pleaded with him to give her cyanide for the child. She's alive, this woman is alive and I think the child is alive, somewhere in Australia. This I heard many years later. I'm trying to remember, she was from a _____ in Kolomyja, Mrs. Hermann, I remember. Apparently the news came that the children would be taken away. I think the full tragedy fell upon me at that point. When I heard children, that they're planning to remove the children, then I knew that this was the end and there really is no way of escaping, there's no more talk about going to the Ukraine for work or anything. That night, it was after that butchering, that night sort of brought the full awareness, the full confrontation with the truth as to what was happening. By then, I think Blancka who worked in that factory at _____ was Lydia, the Polish woman who was the manager of the factory, it was about that time that she came home saying that Lydia is ready to give her papers to run away. I still didn't understand the business of running away, I couldn't understand any of it. A day later she brought papers and she showed me, she had a ken-card-da (ph), she had something which showed that she was, the name

was Bruen-flower Per-nash-ik (ph) and we encouraged her to go away although I wasn't sure because at one point earlier one of my colleagues was trying to get through the ghetto wall and she was shot on the spot. So there was a great deal of conflict that we were encouraging about, we already knew by then that things were going very, very bad. She had lost all her family by then, so we thought, perhaps she should go. She asked me that I should join, I wasn't ready to do anything. My husband started talking about it. He was nearly everyday on the other side and somehow or other he began working toward my escape without my knowledge of it because I didn't want to hear about it. This was towards the end of 1942. By then, we began to talk about it, that you need some hiding places outside of the ghetto. The number of the people was narrowing down very much, there were just a few thousand people left. At it's height, I think there were 30,000 Jews in the ghetto. So we knew that things are narrowing very much, but there was some peace. They didn't do anything for a while. Somehow or other we started talking about perhaps we could get some hiding places on the outside. We had a friend and a woman who was a customer in our store, not quite a customer, she was a Polish woman, a very fine lady who was poor. So, when she established a relation, my father who would give her some of the dishes whatever for, a little money, during the ghetto days she occasionally smuggled some food for us. Her name was Wein-a-rof-ska (ph), and her place was across from the house in which originally my sister Cyla and her husband lived. Somehow or other, he was in touch with her. I found out these things much later. But he was also in touch with another couple. Well, I'm jumping a little bit ahead of time here, but actually came December of 1942 when we began to talk seriously about it. That I should be the ice breaker in a way, I should be the first one in the family to get out, to join Blancka, and then my sister and her child will come.

Q: How would you describe peoples relationships with each other as things are getting so terrible? And you describe this soup kitchen almost like they're ghosts walking towards you?

A: Families are different. I've seen a lot of, it's painful to talk about it because I saw in families, how people were grabbing the portion of food. These were families like my own where we always kept passing the food, I'm not hungry. Particularly my parents, we were this kind of family, close

family, always passing the food to the next one, we're not hungry. But in some families, they were fighting for the bite of food. The people looked liked ghost, they were, all of us were in this, in this area there was no food left. I remember when we started cooking the potato chips, potato peels. My mother cooked it in water, she added a little salt to it. This was the lunch. Lydia Wen-a-rof-ska (ph), this is the Polish woman who sometimes smuggled in, in some way she smuggled in a little flour, so the flour had to be stretched. It was mixed with, sometimes you had only potatoes. But the starvation was everywhere, definitely. I recall, somewhere or other I was younger and I think this helped because my parents legs were very swollen, particularly my father, he couldn't get into his shoes, he wore slippers my then. I took a look at them at one point and I knew they could'nt't stretch it because of the starvation. But more than that, I was just worried that they will be shot. Sometimes I saw these weak people in the house, they didn't even bother to take them out, they shot them right there. So it was at that time, but you want me to come back to Lydia, right? To Lydia, I guess?

Q: I want to ask you, was your father still praying, was he still religious in a certain way?

A: Yes, he was still praying. Many of the orthodox Jews were still praying. I hope he prayed when he was going to death, I hope so, because praying you know, somehow or other gets into another orbit. I read about it later, that many of the Has-sid-ims (ph) they went into the fire while praying so they didn't feel what was going on. I suppose that some of these behaviors anesthetized them, I am not sure it happened to my father but, I wish it would. They were, I'll tell you in a minute how they were killed, and that horrible death, but anyway, working in that part, in the ta-kosh (ph) factory we came home every day but then there were days that we were not permitted to leave the ghetto anymore. And when Blancka left, she somehow or other, she put something into the mind of my husband in particular, that there is a way out. But whether he'd thought about it earlier I'm not sure, he didn't sukkotre it with me. By the way, he looked extremely non-Jewish while I looked Jewish. I didn't know I looked Jewish until I got to the other side, but he did and his Polish was perfect too, so he had some ideas at that point, I think. He started talking about me and I didn't want to hear about it. Finally, the arrangement was that I would be the first one to go to meet Blancka, then my

sister and her baby would come, and then he would arrange for my oldest sister and her son and my parents, he will arrange a hiding place outside of town, through the help of this Lydia Wen-a-rof-ska (ph), and then he will come. And he got himself papers too. I can't remember the name, but he said he had papers. He had, he brought in papers one day, sometime in December, he brought in papers with the name of Julianna Gol-ska (ph), he showed me, that's me. He told me he obtained it through the help of some non-Jewish family and this was authentic. Actually a girl who looked like me, who had died, and he purchased the papers, who he got them through I still don't know. There was so little talk about it. Perhaps he talked more and the fright on my part really obstructed my thinking about it, or my memory about it. I recall, the only way, I still don't know how I decided to go. The only way, because he worked so skillfully on me, that he'll join me in two weeks, he'll come and meanwhile he had arranged all these things, and it seemed, he told me the idea thing, that I will be the path breaker, that I'll be the one to lead the way and they will all survive this way. Whether I really believed it, I wanted to believe it, I still don't know. It was a very hard decision but there was no time for decision. Somehow or other they told me tomorrow, these people will pick you up in the morning at 6:00 in the morning. It was Christmas, 1942, the people I personally didn't know but my family did. They were landowners, Polish landowners, sort of an aristocracy, who had business with my father. My father use to give them these fine porcelain things and they remembered him and they wanted to do something for the family. How we got hold of them, I still don't know. Perhaps my father talked to him, some of these things I wish I knew but I do not. It was Christmas morning, he brought in the night before a krosh-ock (ph), a krosh-ock (ph) is a Ukrainian fur coat, which is a peasant coat, which is skin on the outside and lambs wool inside. Very, you have it on the photos you see of Kolomyja, peasant girls always wore these things, it was warm. I remember he buttoned me up. I remember he put into this sleeve, he put into five dollars into the sleeve of this krosh-ock (ph) we called it, the coat. I said good-bye to my family the night before, at 6:00 in the morning, Christmas morning, 1942, these people were waiting outside in a pair of sleighs with horses. I wish I could remember details, all I know is I went through the wall, which was not very far, the wall of the ghetto. I saw a policeman walking back and forth, he didn't see

me. I recall removing the white arm band and all I know, I was in their carriage and they passed on the Aryan side and the windows of my parents room was through the Aryan side and I saw silhouettes of my parents in the window behind curtains. And I had the strange sense that I'll never see them again. Despite the promises my husband made. And I remember how I tried totally to deny that feeling, to stop that feeling, to stop thinking about it and to concentrate on the ride, and I was sure that somebody will identify me, after all, people knew me in the town, I supposed so. But I was with these Polish people twice my age, they brought me to the railway station. The man went out, he bought me a ticket to Re-volf (ph), I got on the train and I remember very little about the train ride except that I arrived in Re-volf (ph) in the home of their niece or cousin, it was a Christmas party. Exactly what I needed at that point, but I came there, I was introduced as their friend from Kolomyja and it was a lot of festivity going on, there was food on the table. I tried to join and then in the evening I left. I was suppose to come back to their home. And suddenly I saw a middle-aged man following me. I remember he was dressed in a very warm way, there was a sort of kerchief on his head, and he said, Madame, he said in Polish to me, Mrs. Nei-dat (ph), you are the wife of the _____ night of Kolomyja you look very cute, something of this sort, and I started running, and he ran after me. It was a cold night of Christmas in Re-volf (ph) and I think my young, and I could hear his breath against me, and this must have been a scene of running, nobody else was in the streets, there was quite a bit of sleet, it was cold, Christmas night. But I was young and I was a good runner and somehow or other, I still don't believe how this happened, he couldn't follow my steps. And he stopped somewhere, I ran into a courtyard, then another courtyard, and I saw him again, and I could hear his breath and then everything stopped. I never went back to these people. But I had an address of, Blancka gave me some address on High-lit-ska (ph) Street and I went there and I made up a whole story and she wasn't there, I hoped to meet her, and without her and being all alone, it was the first experience, all I wanted the next day was to go home, to go back to the ghetto. And I got in touch with that friend who helped her, Ad-ja (ph) was his name, a German Jew originally who had come from Kolomyja and he was very well entrenched as a Pole, he looked like Polish nobility, and I let him know I was here, he came to see me. We locked the door, and I told

him, I don't want to hear about anything, all he can do for me was to go to the station and buy me a ticket, I was afraid to run around the station, and all I want is to go back to Kolomyja. The man saved my life in strange ways by talking to six hours, he literally out-talked me. By then, I was totally, totally passive and totally listless. I pleaded, all I want is to die with my people in the ghetto and no argument really made sense to me, I wanted to get to Kolomyja and I wanted to die with my people, and he kept saying that I'll never get to my people, you will not be able to get into the ghetto, they will shoot me at the station, and nothing penetrated. Perhaps it did and I didn't want to hear it. I remember that after six hours, I couldn't hear anymore. And he didn't go to the railway station and I passed another day and he made up a whole story, he was my fiancee, he was somebody that was interested in me, and he will visit again. And then later was very interested in him, he looked like Polish nobility, I was figuring there was some money too, I stayed another day and another day. And I had a story, the story was that I came to study _____, I take a _____ course. So, the classes are not held every day and it's pretty flexible. Anyway, with the Czech she looked away, she didn't know, I still don't know. We don't know these things, but she kept me. A few days later Blancka arrives. Things fell through for her in Warsaw, she had only been to Warsaw, they caught _____ into Warsaw, and there things broke. So she came back here and we started a life together in that apartment, in that furnished room, and he would visit us and was, she always was a charismatic student and so on. And one day, and this is after Christmas naturally, I had news from the ghetto, from Maria Roman-o-rof-ski (ph), through that woman who pushed food into the ghetto, and that everything was still the same, no change, they were still alive. And one day, Blanca's looking for work, everybody said I shouldn't walk in the streets so easily, but then people were conscious I looked Jewish, I didn't know, but Blancka looked Polish, so she went for a newspaper very early in the morning to see what the _____, what or where were jobs, to look for a job. And she hears somebody, calls her Blancka, and she got very frightened naturally because by then her name was Broom-ka Ba-nat-chek (ph). She took a look in the doorway, sits my sister with the baby and her sister-in-law and they look like chimney sweeps, all covered with ashes from the ghetto, from running away from the fires in the ghetto. She brought

them upstairs to her room and the story came out. The story came out that on the 2nd of February, which I always remember for other reasons too, this was the time that Stalingrad was taken over by the Soviets, this was the first German defeat and was a change in the war, I didn't know then what, all I knew is that on the 2nd of February, the night of the 2nd of February, my parents and my older sister and Menek were sitting in another part of the ghetto by then, in their room, all dressed. For days they expected, they expected the SS or the Germans to come and take them. There was no way out by then, it was a very cold night. And Menek told me years later that somebody came in from the neighbor's to tell about Stalingrad and that my father's spirit was lifted, and I'm so grateful for that moment, that his spirit was lifted. But it was 2 o'clock in the morning or so, they came, and they took all out of them, they took them out. I found out later that they women were separated, my mother and my sister, her daughter and her distant cousin, a young girl, _____, Tou-chie (ph) was her name, they were separated and the men, my father and his grandson, Menek, were taken separate. And hungry they were, they were ill, they were not dressed well, it was terribly cold, sleet in the night, in the middle of the night, they dragged them through the streets of Kolomyja, they dragged them to Chap-a-rot-ska (ph) to be killed there. Frania, who lived in another part of the ghetto, but then her husband had been taken away, she was with the child and she was with her sister and her husband's sister-in-law, this woman left her baby in the ghetto, she ran without the baby. She and my sister and Alex Schlessing, Alex's name was Elee-ow (ph) then, they ran through the fire. The ghetto was set on fire, they ran through the fire and half burned all, all covered with ashes, they found themselves at a neighboring railway station, they bought tickets and came to Re-volf (ph). And they didn't know where to go, they didn't have an address or anything, so they saw one light, lit up, so they went into that building to find out about a hotel and the building was the criminal polizer, the police, the German police, nothing but. Somebody prayed for them. They said, there are no hotels, they walked out. And they sat in a doorway and that is where Blancka met them and she found them. My sister told us of the terrible details, that the parents were separated, and what happened to her and that they could hear the shots. And she thinks, she thought perhaps Menek escaped, she wasn't sure. Nobody knew. All I remember, this was late afternoon,

listening to the story, all I recall was that all I hoped for was that the floor would open up and I will disappear. I didn't want to live. She didn't know enough about my husband, he was separated from my father and Menek. She thought she heard something, that he was taken to prison, that they were beating him, she wasn't sure, nobody knew. I still don't know. Apparently, they either killed him in prison or took him to Chap-a-rof-sa (ph). That was the night, the last night after that, no Jew was left in Kolomyja. My nephew, Menek, wrote up about that night. I recall that I couldn't stand just being alive. I stretched on that floor, Frania too, and I wanted nothing but for the floor to open and the floor didn't open, that hard floor was there. I couldn't even cry. I couldn't take it in in any way. Except Blancka woke me from that stupor I think sometime later saying that the landlady wants to bring us some tea. And this meant we had to get up, wash up, and look pretty. And I recall looking at the mirror and putting on lipstick and not believing it's me. She brought in tea. We had to make arrangements for my sister's place, they slept over that night, we made up a cock-eyed story and later we tried to find a place for them. They found other people from my home town, other women, the men were all killed by then. And the story of many came out much later. What happened to him is a really fantastic story. He was together with my father, being marched from that horrible night, and there was shooting and the dogs were barking and the dogs were biting some people. And he was blaming my father in a way, saying, I told you we should have run away earlier, we should have gone to the place, whatever, and my father said to him, something from the Talmud, he said, the Talmud says if the sword is around your neck, a miracle may happen. He was then 15 or 16 years old, he interpreted this as a sign from his grandfather he should run away, so he ran away. For years he was trying to get hold of that quotation, found out about it rather recently, but he ran away and the people were being marched, they were marched to Sukkotp-a-rot-ska (ph). By then it was early morning and the neighbors could look out and some saw the Jews. And he was wounded in his leg, a shot came to, a bullet got into his leg. He fell on snow and ice. A Ukrainian policeman stepped over him and said to the Germans very stoically, he's dead. And as that colonnade of people marched and marched for hours, he was lying there, then he felt himself alive, just bleeding, so he crouched, he approached a house he knew in the ghetto where he had worked somewhere and

he saw a baby in the fireplace. This is a story he told me about five years ago, he couldn't talk about it. And he didn't know whether the parents who ran, left the baby, hid the baby there because apparently there was no fire before, or whether the Ukrainians or Germans put the baby into the fireplace and set the fireplace afire. This he kept secret. Somehow or other, he jumped from that place because he heard the SS marching, and the Ukrainians, he jumped in the attic to another place. He was jumping most of the time, he heard the shots and through _____ in that snow he got outside of the ghetto to the house of the Polish woman, Bron-ra-off-ska (ph), who use to live across the street from their home and who use to take care of the plants of the flower plants of my sister-in-law when my sister went on vacation. This Polish woman was poor and she supported herself by renting rooms to Ukrainian gymnasium students. So she had a husband and she had two students who lived there because they went to the gymnasium and they paid her something, that's how she lived. Very early morning, he appeared at the door of this woman. I'm sure he looked more animal than human, and he heard the shots going on the Chap-a-rot-ska (ph), he knew this was his mother, he knew this was his grandparents, and he pleaded with the woman to let him in for the night, he was bleeding. And she said she can't, she's afraid because the Ukrainian students were there. Somehow or other, I think, out of pity for this child-animal, she let him in for one night. She put him in the barn. Next morning she came to take him out and she was one who my father helped occasionally with some of the dishes to give her for a little money, I don't know what moved her, she didn't have the heart to take him out. She left him, she covered him with straw and under straw he lived there for about six or seven months. She kept him there. She lived with great danger, her husband she apparently let on many months later. The Ukrainian students never knew about it. Every night she would smuggle a little food downstairs. He was immobilized, he didn't move, it was _____ then. One day, he remembers, it was Spring by then. Well, that night, he says, all he kept thinking, which of these bullets killed his mother and his grandfather and his grandmother because that's all he could hear, all night and all day the shooting was going on. This was the last of the Kolomyja Jews and he remembers that all he was, felt guilty that he wasn't there. But he was covered in snow, by straw. And one day, toward the Spring in March, he saw the snow coming

down the windows so it was a little light. Until then, he didn't see any daylight because snow and ice covered the windows. And he looked around and he saw some books. These Ukrainian students apparently when graduating they threw the books into the basement. One of the books he took was a chemistry book. He started reading. That is why he's one of the foremost bio-chemist. He's the one who is the developer of the _____, _____, Menek Goldstein. This was the beginning of it, the chemistry book. He lived hungry there because very little food she could afford to give him, she was afraid, every night would bring down a little bit, he was a growing boy. And he lived in extreme terror of discovery, always afraid of the Ukrainians. And one day, the woman comes in, she says, there is a denouncement, somebody denounced that she's harboring a Jew, he has to disappear. That night, it was Spring of 1944, that he had to leave the basement, the shed. And he remembered that Selik (ph), my husband's brother, had told him some time ago that he and some others would have a hiding place. In the middle of the night he ran to that hiding place, they didn't want to let him in. They didn't want another person, they were afraid. But my brother-in-law insisted, he had a gun with him because he was a policeman, so they let him in. So he was liberated there by the Soviets. When the Soviets came he couldn't walk so they carried him. The Soviet soldiers carried him on their arms to the _____, to the municipality to show what happened. Later on, is a long story. But, there's the story of Menek. Later on still begins a long story, but that's one of, this is how Menek survived and how he depicted it in his statement about the last night in Kolomyja. And us he told little details each time, each time we commemorate in a quiet way. My sister, Menek and I, we commemorate February 2nd. We don't have any celebration, we don't do anything much, but we don't go to cinemas and we don't do any entertainment, we have dinner together and we sit down and over the years always some detail comes out. Some of these details just came out within a few years. He couldn't talk about that baby, he couldn't talk about some of the things. But that book of chemistry had such an influence. It's a long story about Menek, another time perhaps. So I worked because I wanted to make sure that the story of the last day in the ghetto, my parents horrible deaths, how they dragged them in that terrible, on ice, how they were falling around and I hoped they never reached that _____,

that they died on the road, but I'll never know. They were separated, men and women. Can you imagine what happened to my father all alone. Menek ran away, he didn't know Menek would survive to tell this story but he did. So, this was the end of the ghetto. I knew these details from my sister in that house, that evening, and I said, we have to get up because this lady decided to give us tea, we have to make up and look human. Then we found a place for her and then started all kinds of troubles because somebody told her that she is harboring Jews and had to run away from the place. Anyway, it was, one day I walked with my sister and her child, and she was in grave danger because the boy was circumcised and with two of her friends, women friends from the ghetto, and their children. And we were looking for the place for them to live because they were denounced by then. My sister had some diamonds sewn into the buttons of her sweater, she never removed the sweater. Each time things happened, she sold the diamonds somehow or other. Kept all of us, Blancka and me alive too. At one point, I needed new documents and the diamonds bought it. We need an apartment and the diamonds bought it. We were looking for something and I notice a girl who looks at me very much, it was a former student from my home, a Ukrainian girl. And before I know, I notice that she is bringing over a Ukrainian policeman. It was very dangerous and I motioned to Branch and to the other women, it's not good, we have to do something, we have to disappear, but how do we disappear? He's looking at us. So we decided to disappear in the next store, which was a millenary store, selling hats. This is 6 o'clock in the evening and we try on every hat in the store hoping that this man will disappear. Well, sitting there and trying on hats is exactly what we need at that point, he did not disappear. The store closed, we had to move. He did approach us, in very quiet words, voice, not to make any noise, he said, come with me, I know your Jewisses. He started marching us out, what helped us most was it was dark. The darkness helped all of us at that point. And he took us somewhere in an isolated area, he had a revolver with him and he said, I'm going to shoot you. So we started pleading. I started pleading with him that he shouldn't shoot my sister, if he has to shoot someone, me, because she had a baby, she had a child. Anyway, he decided not to shoot but to take everything we had. Rings, jewelry, whatever we had, there were five women of us. He got everything. He even took my coat. We couldn't go back to

that place were we lived anymore, we had to find new places. This was continuous when they caught us, we had to. Finally we got a place, things quieted down a little bit. It was a better time. Blancka and I got jobs in a German hospital. This was a hospital for the treatment of returned soldiers from the front. They had frost bite, they were sick, they had wounds, so Blancka became their scrub woman and I was assigned to the apothotacary (ph) which was very good for me because I knew something and I was handy about things, but I never disclosed that I knew German or anything so I was dumb. It was quite a period in our lives except we sukkotred a room somewhere, a furnished room, and I developed a terrible pain in my feet. I couldn't walk, I couldn't walk to the toilet. And the question was, what do I do, how does one go to a doctor? Finally things are so bad that they decided I have to go to a doctor. It was Polish doctor and he said, I have flat feet. Which I got because I was so swollen, I ate only potatoes, breads, whatever it was. And I swell up to such an extent, I weigh so much more _____. Anyway, he put me into some shoes which I wore through the rest of the war. It helped immensely. And things were pretty smooth at one point. Frania was also set up somewhere and one day, in that apothecary, the Ukrainian girl walks in. She must have followed me or whatever. And she knew Stodge (ph), the chief of the Upper Taker (ph) German men in uniforms in the military hospital. And she says, I know from _____ that she's Jewish. And he paled, I could see the blood was running down his face and immediately he reaches out for the telephone, I assume to call the military police, and I jumped through the window, it was a ground floor. I don't know, I don't know how I did it, I did it! How did I walk out of the ghetto, I jumped through, how did I did it, I don't know? And I run into Blanca's other, to her and I say, let's escape, and we run away, told our story, couldn't get back anymore because we knew that we would be denounced. We found out hours later, we find posters with our names and also in it they said Jewish Women and they masquerade for, they're trying to fool the German government, and so much money is offered for our capture and so on. We sat in doorways, Ed-au (ph), somehow it involved Ed-au (ph), he was with us, he helped. He got us tickets at night we went to the railway station, we got tickets to go to Warsaw. I never knew anything in Warsaw, I knew nobody. Blancka had been at Warsaw, she knew the city. On the train people were talking about soap being

made of Jews, we don't understand what they're talking about, we had no idea about these things. I had a strange, weird feeling but I never understood what they talk was about. Jewish muscles are being turned into soap. Some primitive, very under-educated women sitting in the train with us. We, our arrival, who I thought was a night train, the night train was the best things because it was dark, we arrive in Warsaw, and to just try to get through the railway station to a tram, and suddenly I feel two hands on my shoulders and I see two hands on Blanca's shoulders. These are Polish Secret Agents, they introduce themselves, they're secret agents and in a very polite way, apol-solum pan-ya (ph) which means, would you kindly follow me. We followed them right across the railway station, we see criminal polic-eye (ph), the police! There were all kinds of polic-eye (ph), there was criminal police, there was shoo-pol (ph), there was Gestapo. This is Good Friday, 1943. We come to that station, there's a lot of people there. And they bring in men and we see the flames over the ghetto and to hear the ghetto is fighting. The ghettos being burned, we don't hear about the fights, being burned and the Jews, they are escaping. And we see men being brought in and separated from us immediately, brought to another room, we don't see them ever coming back. Apparently because they are mounted to trucks or cars and ships and somebody immediately. And they try to examine us. They say we are Jewish people. Blancka has a document, I have a document. Where are you going? Where are you from? All kinds of lies, so they don't believe us, and I say, let _____ call _____ you'll find out about us. But there were no telephone arranged to make these calls, or they couldn't get us, whatever it was. A police comes in. Blancka suddenly disappears. I have no, where she goes. I am alone. A priest comes in and he starts examining me, in the catechism, it so happened that I studied it during those months. And he says, I pass. One question he asked, which I didn't know, I later asked many Poles about it, even after the war, very few of them knew. I forgot the name of it, _____, if you give birth to a baby, viv-ia (ph) it's called, the priest, you're not quite clean. The priest has to come out of the church and with his belt he has to bring you in. So, very few Poles know it, very few good Catholics know it. Anyway, he asked that question which I didn't know. The rest, I knew everything very well, and I stuck to my guns. My grandparents name is this and my parents name is that and I live on that

street, and so on. I just told them believe me. Blancka disappeared and I don't see her anymore. The documents we had to leave right there, if you had documents they're not on the desk anymore, my documents are there. My ken-carp (ph), my passport, my money is there. Towards the evening, and I hear some noises and I see the flames of the ghetto, and they talk about it. Says the ghetto is being burned, flames over the ghetto. Towards the evening, one of the Polish policeman, his name is Stau-ck (ph), and he interrogated me a lot, he says, come with me. I'm going to mail a letter. He takes me to the railway station, he mails a letter, no, he takes me to the post office right across the railway station and he disappears. And here am I alone, in the street, probably the most dangerous place in the world for any person, right across the railway station. With the ghetto flames coming right our way, there was a sewer next to me. I see many Polish and Ukrainians, no, Polish and Germans, right there watching the sewers and the top of the sewer comes off and Jews from the ghetto trying to escape and they're being shot on the spot or taken away. And my instinct is to run away but I don't have a document, I don't know the city, I don't have a penny and whether I felt I was at the end of the rope, I do not know. I am totally immobilized. I wait for this man. I didn't care, I knew escaping I would be caught immediately, I would be shot right because the people from the sewers were bring shot right there. And I stand there in that place, which is so unbelievable for me, that I'm standing there and waiting for my death. And he comes out, the policeman, Stau-ck (ph), and he says, come with me. He takes me back to the police station and he says, you prove to me you're not Jewish, you would have run away. He returns to me the documents and the money, what little money I had, and he says to me, come with me. He puts me in the car, he goes with me, he says, you have no place to stay I will get you a place to stay overnight. I figure he probably is putting me at a place where I'll be denounced or whatever. He brings me there, it is right at the border of the ghetto. He opens the door, the landlady opens the door and she opens another door, it was French doors I remember, and there sits Blancka. He re-united us until today's day, we don't know who this man is. He came back next day, he told Blancka that I look Jewish, no, he didn't say Jewish, he says, it's better if you try to get out, let her stay home and it will stop something, the message was that I looked Jewish. We later wondered, we still don't know, that perhaps he was

with the Polish underground, I wish I knew. Certain things I so wish I knew. I stayed there. The screams from the ghetto were coming out, all night. The trucks were being loaded with people and there was shooting going right there and the flames were very close. I don't know why he brought us there, perhaps he felt this was safe place, perhaps these were safe homes that they had for the underground, I say, this all comes from later reading. I don't know what happened. He came back a few times, he told Blancka to go to the are-bites-aumph (ph) and look for a job and indeed, one day, she found a job through the are-bites-aumph (ph) and she became a maid, a cook in a German household. The people's name was Kinsel (ph). The man was the chief representative of taxation for all of the government. There were twenty people working for him, they all were CPA's or accountants. Blancka was cooking lunch for them and one day she tells me she needs help, she cannot do so much, so they say go and look for help, she says she has somebody she knows, she brings me and they have this scene in the book, I think. I played the role beautifully of being a real maid from the worst parts of the city where I cannot speak any German, my mother is a laundress from that, I'm use to violence, I'm use to, I look a little bit like a whore, they said, when they interviewed me. I didn't understand what in German, I had to, ask Blancka put it, the translation. And they look at me and they say, they're not sure I belong here, I look like a whore, I look like a thief. And with this background _____, so Blancka says perhaps she'll try out for a few days. Anyway, when I came back to the kitchen we started laughing in unbelievable ways. And since then, I was there to clean the rooms and she was my supervisor, she had a better job, she was the hausfrau, you know, she was the cook and she was the house maid, _____. The trouble was when they wanted to send me to buy something, I was afraid to walk in the street. So, I would walk in the streets like this, with my nose up, because my nose was a give-away. I had fantasies of getting plastic surgery on my nose but first I didn't have a penny to do it and then I was afraid of these doctors. So I didn't do it. But the nose was a give-away. Polish girls in Warsaw look very different, broad cheeks, blonde, we may look different now but in those days, you could see a Slavonic face. And besides, there were people just seeming to do nothing but looking at you to see whether they can catch a Jew. I remember a child once attacking me, saying I'm Jewish and I

opened my big mouth and I said, I'm going to call the police, you know, I threatened him. This happened to me a few times, whenever I was accused of something, I would open a big mouth, but I was in danger all of the time. We lived with these people in a very good neighborhood because the Germans occupied the best part of town. We had a room to ourselves and they would travel very often to Germany, they had a baby. And for us these were the best days, when they went away because we could invite some people, we found people like Lod-joy (ph) and High-lin-ka (ph) and Boil-it (ph), we found the underground. I recall distinctly the day when I found out there was an underground. This was one of the great days in my life. My depression, my sense of extreme terror, lifted. I knew if I'm going to die, I'm going to die in some way knowing that Germans are being killed. There is a resistance movement. It was a fantastic experience. Until then, I didn't know about any resistance. They were the first ones to introduce me to it. There's the Polish resistance and Jewish resistance fighters and they're actually attacking Germans. To be connected with this was, lifted me up in ways that I didn't know until that was possible. I wasn't afraid because I was not afraid of dying. So many times that I wanted to die, I think that dying, it is the way to die, I was afraid of the way in which they'll kill me. If I'm detected as a Jew, there are particular kinds of brutalities against people who cheated the German government, these are the German SS. So they had horrible ways of killing you and this is what I wanted to avoid. But to be dead, it really did not matter. At no time did I believe I would survive, at no time did I believe this was possible. We didn't see the end of the war yet.

Q: Let me ask you a somewhat frivolous question perhaps. Did you rehearse being this maid before you walked into the Kensel (ph) house? Who was this character?

A: I rehearsed to some extent, I can't remember that I rehearsed. I was prepared in a way, that I'll wear a, what do you call it, a dish towel around my body. That I'll speak that Polish slang. I knew about enough Polish, although I didn't think they will know the difference, really, but that I will be looking down at them with some sort of suspicion. That I will take the job that fits me or I will not be interested, the job may be too heavy, I'll see. That I come from Mok-ul-tof (ph), Mok-ul-tof (ph) was a place, was a suburb which was working people with a lot of crime in it and prostitution and

open bars and so on. And that my mother is a washer woman there. And this gave them, Blancka translated it all, and then they sent me out and then they called in Blancka saying that they're not sure that they, that I belong, really. This is background, I look a little like a thief, that I may steal. And there was a guest of theirs there, no, she looks more like a prostitute. So Blancka says she didn't know, but she'll hire me for a few days, see what happens. And then there were twenty people working for this company, some of them were Jewish we found out later. They were the CPA's and the accountants. And work, being sent on errands was a death sentence to me because I knew I'll never come back, but they sent me to buy this and buy that. And these kids in the street, saying Jud-ifka (ph), looking at me saying Jud-ifka (ph), the Jewiss. How these kids knew immediately, it is in the blood stream. When people are trained for generations to identify enemy people they know. Same, I am sure it was here, with whites and blacks for centuries. So every kid in the street identified me that easily. And whenever I came home safe, it was a miracle. Our greatest enemies were the people who, nos-trouch (ph), trouch (ph) is like a door man, but actually like a concierge, but lesser in status. They were saying we had to register and he was on the out look for Jews because finding these Jews, there was money. So there were always some stories, that the Jew was caught and there were always posters in the streets, they will offer $50, $100, whatever it is, if they would find the Jew. So there was a searching for Jews going on continually.

Q: There was a word that was used for these posters?

A: Sch-mol-siv-a-nik (ph). Sch-mol (ph) means fat. They assumed that people would live off the fat. And they're job, and there were too many of them, terribly many, might have happened in other countries too but in Warsaw it was a gang of Sch-mol-siv-a-nik's (ph). Some of them might have been rich, some poor, some just hated Jews, some just wanted the money, whatever it was, they're job was to find a Jew and to extort money from him. Sometimes they delivered you later to the police station but sometimes they let you go. Sometimes they took your documents in addition to the money. But Sch-mol-siv-a-nik (ph) was a profession at that point. They stood in the streets of Warsaw and they observed you and they approached you. Once on a tram, I saw a man looking very suspiciously at me. And I jumped and I broke my nose and I bled in the street and the tram

went further. And Blancka later came out on the stop and she found me lying in the street bleeding, went to a pharmacy, I broke my nose. We couldn't go to a doctor, you were afraid. You were afraid of those Polish doctors too, and rightly so. I recovered, and then the same happened over and over again. Stel-ma Hov-en-jev-ens (ph), the book about the story about Stel-ma Hovich (ph), his brother by the way just published a fantastic memoir on the Holocaust, not to be missed. I'll give you later the full title of it, I spoke to him on the telephone. Stel-ma Hovich (ph) survived to become a big shot in Soviet occupied Poland as a chief bookkeeper for the government. He met my sister, he told her that I might be alive, he wasn't sure. That from that house people were taken to Germany, he wasn't sure. He later found his brother, the brother that has that fantastic story about he and his brother ran away from Treblinka. He later joined his brother in Italy. A woman with whom he was involved rejected him, that was how the story goes, he came to Italy. He was depressed, he committed suicide. That was Stel-ma Hovich (ph), you ought to read the book, it's a fantastic memoir. But this was one later of how other people working in this place were Jewish, Blancka recognized someone from her home town. They were all afraid of me because I masqueraded as a main of the worst background, worth Polish background, they were afraid of me. But she told Stel-ma Hovich (ph) and a certain, years later, but anyway. So to move from it, one day, a man that I had seen in Germany, and Blancka made very good strudels, oh, there is something? To stop?

Q: No, we have a few more minutes.

A: That's all we have?

Q: Five more minutes.

A: For the rest of my story?

Q: No. Just the tape.

A: Oh, good, fine. This man like her strudel and he offered to take her to Heidelburg to be a maid for his family. Blancka decided to go.

Q: Let me go back to something and maybe we'll be able to stop the tape. I want to ask you about how you met people in the resistance, how you met Voler (ph) and others?

A: Sure. There was somebody in our house who was always under, always live under disguise. I forgot her name now, but she introduced us to Hele-inka (ph) and Bowl-ick (ph) and they loved our place because it was a safe place in a German neighborhood, German people living in it, so occasionally they would come up. Particularly when the people for whom we worked were in Germany and the place was closed. On a Sunday, they would come up and they would teach us to sing partisan songs, from the Bont (ph), I couldn't believe it, the whole thing! I say this was the happiest days in my life during the Holocaust because I felt, I didn't feel the fear, I didn't feel the fear at all, I just felt the sense of resistance. And I think if I'm not mistaken, Blancka once brought some documents for children because it was such a safe place, so we had _____ all of the time.

Q: So this is Latka-mead (ph)?

A: Latka-mead (ph), I think she brought some documents for children into our old room but I'm not sure, at this point Bowl-ick (ph) and Hele-inka (ph) were very much a part of our lives and Henrich (ph), he died later. There was another man who wrote the beautiful memoir of _____, Bear Witness, Bernard (ph). He too was involved in some way. So it was like I knew life, an unbelievable kind of new life where we felt even if we died there was a resistance. The Germans are losing. So Sunday afternoon, occasionally, these people were away, they would come and we would listen to the in British radio, which was certainly not permitted. And we would sing these songs and one day, against our expectations, these people, the Germans, come back earlier from a weekend. They use to go to Berlin, come back earlier for a weekend and here is this group, we are singing and they're listening to the British radio. Well, that fright was unbelievable, but they walked in. We hid these people under our beds, we finally got them out, it wasn't so simple. We had many such occasions where we smuggled people in and then we had to offer them under the bed to a hiding place, and then to smuggle out through the door, all of these things were extremely anxiety provoking. Scenarios, but they were a part of our life at that point. Until the man came saying he was taking Blancka to Germany if she wants to go and she registered for a trip, the separation was very difficult for us. I remember, we went to Bowl-ick's (ph) home for a sort of a

party, a get away party, and when I walked out of the party I was drunk and I kept saying in the tram, I'm Jewish, that's all I needed to say. And they following day she left and I was left alone, it was a terrible loss for me naturally, but she, we thought about the past, how to join her, everything was very uncertain.

Q: Maria, you talked about how difficult it was when Blancka was leaving for Hiedelburg. Tell me something about your relationship and what it meant to be able to be together in a situation like this?

A: Extremely important to have another body. Not to be alone. Being alone, being isolated was one of the great dangers. You just couldn't hardly survive without having someone with you. I remember days when I was very much isolated whenever things happened. Blancka had to run, I had to run you know? It was, it felt, you really couldn't live through it. But when Blancka left, it was a great loss to me. We maintained correspondence in some way, she was able to write from Germany, and there was always some hope that perhaps I'll find myself there, although I didn't believe it. She encouraged me to go but how could I go? For me the greatest danger was to go to the official employment bureau to ask for a job because to go to Germany you had to apply for a job there. There had to be proof for a job there. For me just to show myself, show my face in these offices was very dangerous. So we maintained our contact mainly through correspondence at that point, but until then, we were extremely inter-dependent. Her looks were helpful, I had more sense of danger I think, of reality, I was quick this way for some reason. I think we complemented each other very well this way, but we were very close to each other and as I say, we were intimate in our relationship and I knew of the losses she suffered. She knew very much of my family life. She tried to steal some oranges in the hospital to bring to Lash-ick (ph) so we were very intertwined, extremely so. And her absence left a tremendous void in my life, but more than that, a sense of danger too, that I'm all alone here. I had no idea the war was coming to an end. Coming back to it, I remember Bowl-ick (ph) and Helene Ko-vet-all-lich-al (ph) and Lod-ja (ph), we had intermittent contact. From the time she had left until I joined her wasn't that long. I'm trying to remember, I can't remember exactly when she left but somehow within the next few months the Germans started running. We heard about it, that the Soviets are approaching. Even before that, Blancka and I

celebrated each victory on the part of the Soviets. At one point, we heard that Kolomyja was liberated and this came through the radio, the British radio, no, another city, I'm sorry. On the British radio, on that radio we heard it later in Germany. So we celebrated each time, quietly. We had such a double life, an official life and a life between each other. We were extremely close, I would say, in a very intimate kind of relationship. We maintained it later for many decades too. But when she left, it was pretty, I did have some correspondence, I heard a little of it, that she was working in a household there. She didn't seem to be in danger of any kind, danger of detection. It was very soon afterwards we heard rumors that the Soviets are approaching, they are taking over large parts of Poland, the eastern part. And one day, I remember, the German family for whom I worked just took off to their town in Germany and they didn't come back. And within a few days, the office workers also left. And then I was all alone when I heard that the Soviets are approaching Warsaw, they're in Prague, in the suburb of Prague. Being all alone, the telephone stopped working, I would have like to call Lodz, I would like to call Helena but I couldn't, but I was all alone, I figured, well, in a few hours or so the Soviets are going to be here, so walk out of the apartment. This was a German section, the Germans were not there anymore. There were Poles, and I knew the Soviets are coming in. I didn't really think about my sister, Frania, she was involved with the child, I didn't know about Menek, although we did have some intermittent communication. At one point, pretty much everything stopped, we didn't know. But I knew that I'm going to be free in a few hours. But the Soviets did not come in. And I was all alone in that big apartment, not understanding why they take so much time. The following morning, I began to hear some shooting. I later found out there was an uprising, the Poles started an uprising against the Soviets. This was beyond my belief! Well, before I knew, the Germans were coming back and the Poles seemed to be fighting both the Germans and the Soviets. I walked out in the street to see what's happening, I was terribly isolated by then. I saw people running. All the Polish people from the neighborhoods were running. I joined them, I didn't know why people were running. And so we kept running, we moved slowly into sewers. Suddenly I'm in sewers. And then the Polish people began to talk about what happened. That there was an uprising, that the Soviets didn't come in, that the Germans are

back. And that the city is being burned down. Well, I didn't feel a minute anymore about being, the part about being Jewish. This did not, somehow or other, I can't remember, that Helin-ka (ph) and Bowl-ick (ph) joined me. I think we ran together but this is what I'd like know, to see Helin-ka (ph) to find out these details. I don't remember whether we, how many days we were in the sewers, but it seemed like an eternity naturally. And from time to time, the sewer door would open and you could see a street and you could hear some shooting and then it would close again and we were again in the sewers. I don't remember how we were fed but somebody, there was some crumbs of food going around.

Q: Were you in the water?

A: In the water, that high up. And these were not the sewers of the ghetto, these were the sewers of the city of Warsaw, Polish people. Some were in uniforms, some were civilians, all age groups. I didn't know how far we were going, what it was I thought a day, but it was more than a day definitely. It was a good many days, the idea was, I found out later, that we will be going up to the vestibular where we will get out and get a boat to go to the Soviets, to Prague. Finally we arrived at the vestibular and Bowl-ick (ph) and Hel-inka (ph) and I, by the way, we wrapped around ourselves a blanket so we wouldn't be separated because there were lots of people there, we were afraid we would be torn apart. And to come out in that bright sunshine, this was September of 1944, August, end of August, beginning of September, 1944. And we tried to get into a boat, there were many people coming out of the sewers, and we see the city is pretty much in flames, and we try to get on a boat. We cannot get in, it's filled, Bowl-ick (ph) got on the boat, Hel-inka (ph) and I still waited for another boat to come. The Soviets are right across the vestibular, some people were trying to swim it. Suddenly from no where the Germans appeared, the vestibular is at the bottom of the city. The important part of the _____ hill, the old city. Suddenly, there are Germans in the old city and from no where I feel a bullet in my back. They shot me through my coat, I was in a coat, and I'm bleeding. And the same bullet goes into the arm of Hel-inka (ph). I fell to the ground, she didn't I think. I was pretty unconscious, I was bleeding. And then they have us get up, I still don't understand how it was possible for me to be bleeding and get up, and we are being marched. We

were apparently, I found out later, the last group of the Polish uprisers. And they are dragging us through the city of Warsaw. We see the city in flames, and they are dragging me, I can hardly drag. And all of us have to put out a handkerchief or something to show to the Germans our surrender. We had to show something white, flags we didn't have, so everybody raises a hand with a little shirt or something, we're surrendering. I couldn't walk, people helped me or what, I don't remember. All I recall, at one point, I was extremely thirsty, probably from loss of blood, and I bent down to pick up an apple. Poland is full of orchards, of apple orchards, it was the season for it. I tried to get an apple into my mouth and a German soldier hits me right in my back, march! He didn't know I was Jewish, but then I was totally unafraid of being detected as a Jew. I was a Pole. They marched us to a place outside of town called Poroskov. In Poroskov they had a special detention camp for all the Poles who fought in the uprising and other Poles too. Lodz eventually was in Poroskov too but I didn't know at that time. I was so sick that I wish I knew these details because I didn't function mentally anymore. But I recall waking up, there are somehow or other bodies on top of me. It was so crowded there that they pushed people, we fell asleep and the bodies, somehow or other I sneaked out of it. Before I know it, I was on some transport being marched again to a place to be, to a place to be, anti-loused, means cleaned of lice, a de-lousing station. And then they put us on a train and I'm on a train with Hel-linka (ph) holding onto each other and with lots of other Poles. Polish families, not children, Polish men. On that train, and by then it is September I know, on the train were the only two women and the men are all in Polish uniforms, they were fighters. The train was moving very slowly, I had no idea where we were moving, we fall asleep all of us. Sometime in the middle of the night, or it was very early morning, one of the fighters wakes up and he starts talking to the other one, the Jews brought all the tragedy and the Jews will take over Poland because of the Soviets and they got us into all that trouble. And one of these guys looks at the other and says, you know what, these two girls across from us, they look Jewish. You better tell. By then it was about four in the morning or so and it was just light, it was just coming, and then they fell asleep. And without saying another word to Hel-linka (ph), we motioned to each other that we're going to jump from the train. I'm sure that the motivation was not to escape from that, the

motivation I believe, but I'm not sure, was to just die. Before these Germans come to take us. We understood by then that the train was being shipped out to Stutthof, which was a detention camp where Polish people were shipped in order to work for the Germans. And we knew the beginning of the day will bring the greatest horrors to us when the Germans arrived to take us out. So without saying a word to each other, the window was open, the train was moving very slowly, I can't remember who jumped first. And I can't remember anything else except that I wake up in the home of a Polish woman in a town called Toe-mash-off-maus-off-yetski (ph). I never heard of the town, it's south of Warsaw. These women had attended me, given me a clean bed, attended to my wounds, told me the story of what happened after I woke up. I don't know, it was a few days that I was pretty unconscious. She said that when we jumped out a priest thought we were dead. He was going to the cemetery to bury some body, he saw these two girls from the Warsaw uprising, so he figured he's going to bury us, with a decent Catholic burial. When he noted that we were breathing. So first he buried these people who he meant to bury, then he brought us to this Polish woman on the outskirts of Toe-mash-off-maus-off-yetski (ph). Poor woman but a very decent soul. She was very happy to be able to be of service to these Polish revolutionaries, the Poles who fought, the Polish fighters who fought for independence of Warsaw. So she treated us beautifully, I could see how poor she was but she treated us extremely well, and one day a neighbor comes in and she opens the door to our room and she wants to tell him, these are two girls who were in the Polish resistance movement. He takes a look at us and he says, she look Jewish. That night, Hel-linka (ph) was sick of me because she looked Polish, she said good-bye to me and I haven't seen her until years after the war. I saw her again about two years after the war. Hel-linka (ph) had blue eyes and she was blonde and she wanted out. I stayed on, I didn't know what to do. The Polish woman was absolutely an angel, she said you have to go, you can't be here. She wrapped up for me half her bread in a kerchief and two apples and early morning I leave. I didn't know where I was going but, it didn't matter. At that time, nothing mattered anymore. I knew I wasn't afraid at all because I wasn't Jewish anymore, nobody would think of me as Jewish at that point. Poland was falling apart. I kept walking, so I walked into town.

Q: You just said that it didn't matter that you were Jewish because people were, but this man noticed and this woman?

A: That man noticed, but on the whole people were already running and life didn't matter to me. I was all alone, I was wounded, I had a pain in my back. I had nothing. I didn't know where to go, I don't think I had documents at that point because I was running in the sewers, I don't remember what happened. And I don't remember because I was on the high fever. So I walk into that town, I see Thom-ma-sla-sov-en-sky (ph), I never heard of it before, there are two Thom-ma-slick's (ph), one is _____

the other _____ is the home of Rabbi Lowengers (ph) brother. They preeminently gave testimony about their experiences as children in camps. So I walk in, I hardly walk, but I walk with the apples and the bread. I see an apothecary for pharmacy. European pharmacies are very different than ours, they're very formal. I had nothing to loose, I walk in, I say I am a, I ran away from the uprising, I fought in the uprising because this was my new identity. The man, and I know a little bit about pharmacological work because my husband was a pharmacist, I use to help him, he is delighted to see me, he says. Well, first I wanted to rest up, I wanted to meet my family, tomorrow you come to work. You can do bottles, you can wash up, fine. He sends me upstairs to his family, a nice home they made, his wife was charming to me, the maid makes a luxurious bed for me, I felt so guilty to get into that bed with beautifully clean linen. I haven't seen that in a long time, starched linen I remember. And they invite me for dinner and everything's fine. And I sleep through the night and in the morning the maid comes in saying, she's very sorry but her landlady told her how sorry she was but I cannot stay here any longer. I think, ah-oh, they discovered where I was. So I say, what happened? She says, in the morning when you got up I made the bed, I noticed there were lice in your bed. And my landlady says you should go because you were wounded. You should go to the clinic to clean out your wound. Well, I still remember laughing to myself, lice! Anything is better than being discovered as a Jew! I dragged myself to that clinic and they started working on me and the doctor without any anesthesia they cleaned my wound, it was extremely painful I remember. I screamed from pain. And they took out the lice, they cleaned me

out totally. And I hear the nurse saying to the doctor, you know, she looks Jewish. Here I'm in the hospital, in the emergency room. Nothing happened and nothing mattered at that point, I walked out, I knew I was bandaged. I didn't have lice. I figured should I go back there, it's really not the place for me to go back, I'm afraid. By then it was very late evening, I was extremely tired. I was still so very sick. I ate those apples and the rest of the bread and I stretched out on a bench. It was a cold night, it was by then I think the end of September, beginning of October. It was raining, drizzling, and I fell asleep and nothing matters. Sometime in the middle of the night, somebody pushes me. I open my eyes. A German soldier, a German policeman. Come, he says to me. I wasn't afraid. He didn't know in the middle of the night that I was Jewish or anything, he was collecting all these homeless people to ship them out to Germany. So he brings me again to a place for cleaning, de-lousing, clean, I walk out clean. I think they gave me something fresh to wear, I don't remember. And he brings me to an assembly hall where there are lots of Polish women. All these women, collected from the street, are being shipped to Germany to work. By then the Germans were loosing the war, their men where coming home on crutches. Their women were sent to the front to work. They didn't have enough workers so they were collecting Polish people all over. I'm among Poles, therefore nobody knows I'm Jewish. But, we get on a train, and then the man who is a greeter tells us we are going to go to Germany to work but before we do we are going to stop in Pat-o-vich-a (ph), which is a border town which by then was Germany. And he takes us out and he says, I want you to sit in this corner, we were a few hundred people by then, to sit in this corner and to wait for the evening. We are going to take an evening train and I'll come back in the evening. We know you'll sit and rest here, will being some food. I took a look at the group and I didn't know whether I looked at them or they looked at me but it didn't look to me kosher that I could survive with these Polish groups. So I said, if I have to be back and see if I could walk away a little bit, so I walked away. And here I could see Germany falling apart. Many Polish people of German extraction, falk-stoich-er (ph), are coming into the station. They are running from the Soviets. And at the station there are many soup kitchens supervised by German nurses, like the German Red Cross. So I hear their story about how the Soviets are after them, how they ran away

from rape and all kinds of things, so I figured, I'm also falk-stoich-er (ph), why not? I speak German better than they. So I go over and I ask for soup and I tell them that I'm running from the Soviets so they give me one cup of soup and another cup of soup and a third cup of soup. I remember milk so distinctly, finally I am full, I've eaten good food. And this is a Sunday afternoon I believe and I walk out of the station. Pat-o-vich-a (ph) is not touched, it is a German city, it's an industrial city, it was the biggest textile city after Manchester, I knew about it. And I see the stores full of fabrics, I couldn't believe what's going on here. I came from the ashes, literally from the ashes of Poland. And I walk and I don't know where to walk, I figure I have to walk away from that Polish group. Let's see if I can get to Heidleburg because I'm wanted in Germany, and since everybody's running. I'm not Jewish, everybody's running, the German, the falk-stoich-er (ph) are running, the Poles are running. The Poles couldn't run they are too _____ but the Germans were running from their home. So I see a Hitler parade, and believe it or not, this is the funniest thing in my life! I joined the Hitler parade and I go like this, Heil Hitler! Heil Hitler! _____. First they had soldiers in brown shoes, but then people talked, it was Sunday afternoon, I think it was for Hitler's birthday, I'm not sure, but it was a special occasion. So I walked with them until the evening, then they disperse.

Q: What's your state of mind when you joined this parade?

A: Oh, I was so exhilarated. I was absolutely exhilarated. Imagine me to join a Hitler parade! I'm in Germany! This still brings to me laughter whenever I think about that moment! How did I do it, but what else could I do? I was in the safest place to be for me. In a Hitler parade! I'm together with all these Germans saluting the flag and all the things, and there are speeches and so on. Many hours pass and the evening comes and they begin to disperse, so I have no place to go. I figured these Poles must have left, but I'm not sure. So I circle around the station. I wasn't afraid because people were on the march by then you see. They were refugees. This was the best feeling for me. I come back, indeed, the people are gone. So I take a look, what am I going to do? Now I'll try to get on a train and find my way to Heidleburg, I knew Blancka was there. I had some idea of where, the place where people from Bolm-sukkot (ph) worked. I got to, it's late evening by then, I get on a

train and I suddenly notice the military train from Russia, the Germans, all military, I'm the only woman. I say, oh, that's very dangerous, so I hide in the restroom. In an hour or so, they need the restroom and start yelling to get out, I get out, they look at me, and by sheer luck because I have to think it was luck you know, the train stops. It was the city of Dresden. So I walk out at the station and the train goes away, it goes wherever they went. I walk, it was very quiet I remember. It was by then, was morning, early morning hours. I walk into town and I sit down in a cafe, I didn't have money but I figure I would sit down, rest stop. And so the new bombs came. This was the great bombing of Dresden, it was an earlier bombing. You see R-A-F, this was the British Air Force. The best feeling in this world, that I'm going to die of a bomb, what can be better? I remember even bombs in Warsaw. At one point, the British were bombing Warsaw and I stayed in a household there, not with the Germans, it was in a Polish place, I had a furnished room, and people were running to shelter. So these people called me, come! Come with us to the shelter! And I did everything possible not to go to the shelter, I wanted to be killed by a bomb. Couldn't be a better death. And I recall doing this, putting my feet up and my head into my legs, hoping that when a bomb kills me that it will kill all of me rather than just some legs or the head separates. This was my dream, to be killed that way. I really didn't want to live, so when people say they tried to survive, they wanted to live, I really didn't want to live but I didn't want to die detected by the Germans. I was afraid of that death. But I've seen before how people were killed and their leg was hung there and I was there and this to me was a horror, so I remember that night of bombing. I didn't go to the shelter but I waited for the bomb, the bomb didn't come to me. So this is Desden, and I sit in a cafe and the second floor of that cafe is coming down and I'm sitting there literally, seeing the bombs, and things happen, it's like an earth-sukkotke, you know? It sounds like an earth-sukkotke. And I see many people are dead in the street and here I walk out alive. I was meant to live and that's all they can say, why I wasn't killed I don't know. So hours later, I walked down to the railway station. I still have in mind if I'm alive I want to go to Heidleburg, so I get a train. It was some sort of a civilian train. Nobody looked at documents, nobody looked at tickets, it was so chaotic. It was mainly refugees from the falk-stoic-er (ph), from everywhere, and Germans too

from the cities, there were bombs, they were moving west, that's how it was going. But mainly from the eastern part of Germany, which was originally Poland. Finally I see this train stops at Frankfurt and before I get out bombs come over Frankfurt, this was a little bit too much, unbelievable. But this was the time of the greatest bombing of Germany. So the railway station is all in fire again and many passengers walk out alive and many passengers are killed right there. And I'm alive. It's fantastic! So I figured, now I have to go from Frankfurt to Heidleburg, certainly no trains anymore, the railway station is all in flames. I see people walking, I follow them, they are walking to the highway to hitchhike. So I hitchhike too, I'm a German you know! I'm a falk-stoich-er (ph), poor, dear soul. I'm better qualified to be falk-stoich-er (ph) than anybody else here because those who live for generations in Poland is falk-stoich-er (ph), that and German, they didn't speak German they didn't know a thing. I'm certainly much more _____, so I go with them. And they start hitchhiking, so I get on a truck, I remember the truck goes only a little place, he leaves me there, I had to hitchhike again. Must have been six modes of transportation, finally a train goes somewhere between Mannheim and Heidleburg. I arrive at Heidleburg, I arrive intact in Heidleburg. I walk into the ladies room to wash up and I wash up and I look in the mirror and I see a chimney behind me, a chimney sweep, and I figure how does a man come into this? I look around, he's gone. So, I wash my hands again, I look again and I see the chimney sweep is back! And I look back, it's not a chimney sweep. What happened? I did this with my hands and I noticed it was me, not a chimney sweep! I was so black, I was so totally black covered with soot. And it was my face, it was not a chimney sweep. _____. I wash my face, I suddenly had a face and it was me. I still have that sense of terror in me when I think about it. I walk out, the city is normal and beautiful and it was the month of October. And in Poland, October as you recall here is lovely, the weather is lovely, it's not cold. I'm without stockings and wooden shoes and the coat through which went the bullet. And I walk and I cannot believe my eyes. And I see some Germans, former soldiers on crutches, a few women. And I just keep walking towards the necht-a-some-a-risa (ph) because in walking toward the station's center, usually it goes down the center of the street, you just walk. Here I see the neck-er (ph) and I figure how can I find out where Blancka is? I

remember the name of her employer. So I stop a little girl and I say to her, do you know Mr. Alber (ph)? And she says, My papa! Like that. There are miracles in this world. My papa! She takes me by my hand and she brings me to Blancka. Blancka nearly fainted when she saw me the way I looked. She took me to the basement to wash me up and put something around my wounds, I was not in such good sukkotpe yet, and she figured I should wait a few days before I go to work. She had meanwhile arranged for me to work for a couple, for a family, in the neighborhood. This was no one else but Professor A-had-es (ph), he was a dean of the medical school in Heidleburg. A high ranking German official in a uniform, he was about 7' tall. He has a wife with four children, a stunning house, absolutely beautiful house. There were bedrooms and attics. They hired me on the spot, I started working. The work was impossible for me, I was not well yet you see? And they gave me an attic room. I had to get the children, clean everything, there were many floors there, beautiful, their house. And in the morning I would have to get the children to school, each child leaving for school with the, Heil Hitler, Maria! This was the greeting, the morning greeting. The lady of the house was sort of neutral. She didn't trust me with cooking, there was nothing to cook. It was toward the end of the war, the Germans had very little, but they had a garden. Everyday, I had to go to the garden and dig out potatoes and leek. And everyday, we had an elegant lunch of potatoes and leeks. I would scrape it off, prepare it, but she would cook it because you put a little bit butter and a little flour and make it look like more of a meal. It was served in beautiful porcelain with silverware, you would never think what you were eating, it was great food. Everyday the same until the end of the war. We had all, for getting rations of food. Everybody was assigned that many grams of bread, so I had a little. He registered me as a falk-stoich-er (ph), which was great. So which means I was entitled to a little bit more bread. So, I would get whatever amount of bread, just a little bit less than they did. On Sunday, everybody had pork. A roast of pork and the Professor would slice it, trying to be fair to everyone. Then he would slice a somewhat thinner part, this is for Maria! He didn't know much German, I knew, because just spoke it haltingly in a way, because she gets a little less. But, I still had a portion. This was one soup, they didn't have either, except that he went a few times to Yugoslavia on trips. And he would bring some peaches from

there and he brought some assortment of foods. Well, this household was a very elegant household. They would have culture evenings, evenings of culture. At which point they would invite about 20, 30 people like a symphony orchestra they would play. These were doctors most of them, famous lawyers, jewelers, you know? And I would set up the chairs and everybody would get a little bit coffee or something but everything was very elegant. The setting was always very elegant. One day, he comes home from one of his sudden trips and he brings some very special food and the lady wraps it up on a tray and she says to me to go to that neighbor, to bring a present from the El-hades (ph) family. I walk there, one of the most stunning houses I've ever seen, I couldn't believe the garden at that house. I ring the bell and the maid says, no, no, the maid's entrance is through the kitchen. I come into the kitchen and I leave that present. Then I find out who now was this family, was Speer. Albert Speer's parents. I didn't know. They gave me the name Speer, the name Speer didn't mean anything to me. They want the movement between history and personal experience but that's true for all survivors. Well, it was an extremely beautiful neighborhood, something like our Scotishville (ph), a very fine section of the city. And Blancka worked in her household and I worked in mine. For me the work was unbelievably heavy, I couldn't do it. I just didn't have the strength of rolling out these very heavy rugs, carpets. Putting them on the snow and beating them on the snow because most Europeans believed that when you beat these heavy carpets on the snow that they get special treatment. To roll it up, to carry it from this, one day I remember I saw planes, allied planes flying over, very much over me. I could nearly talk to them, I felt it was so, but I felt that day I remember, gee, the Americans are coming, or the British, or whoever it was, but I won't live to see them, I was so sick of work, I was so tired of work. One day I fell off the stairway, they had stairways to different floors. And I ripped my face and I think I had a few days of rest and a hospital, the best time of my life! I needed the rest so bad. To dig out in the cold snow, to dig out potatoes everyday. To take care of four children. To do the laundry. To clean the house. To beat those carpets. All of this was a little bit too much for one person. Blancka was with six children and the German lord's point was if a woman has a family of six children they were entitled to one and a half help. If they had four children you were entitled to a foreign worker, I was a foreign

worker. If you had eight children you were entitled to two, if you had six you were entitled to one and a half. So Blancka had another half there, that half later we found out was also Jewish. She still lives in Tacoma, Washington, I knew her. Blancka and I were very closely related in terms of our days off. Our day off was Wednesday afternoon and occasionally we would go to the University, sneak in, but most of the time we would go to this beautiful forest because their houses, the suburb was in forest. Most beautiful section of the city. There was a lovely cafe called Bros-pron-eur (ph). It was cut out of an idyllic kind of a place. It wasn't true, it wasn't possible. That is the place when we heard that the Germans have plans, according to their plans that they withdrew, they withdrew from our home town. These were the news we would get, we knew that they were loosing. But it was still very much inside Germany and little by little I felt I probably will not survive the heavy labor. I was not afraid of being detected because I was only afraid of the Poles, I was not, the Germans wouldn't know the difference, that's a fact. But going down to market for them and all these things, it was uphill, it was very difficult to carry all of that. But I thought I would survive the war if I could survive my health. I couldn't take that heavy labor. Well, one day, the man of the house comes in and he says, it looks as though there is some fighting going on, we would be better off being in the basement at night. Not to stay above because you could see all the airplanes. I didn't listen to the radio, I didn't know much, but I got it from their faces that things are not going well for the Germans. I didn't know how close. So he said that night we should stay in the basement. So we all go down to the basement and sometime early morning I see this man, who always wore the high military uniform, he use to be in Berlin with Hitler, you know, he was a very big shot. But he's in his civilian clothes, it hangs on him it just looks like a diminished man. And he drive out of the garage with this car and the car has a little white flag. And I still don't understand what was going on. Later in the morning, he comes back with a little bandage over his hand, he was wounded slightly in the street fight. He and the mayor of the city and somebody else went to Mannheim to surrender the city of Heidleburg to the Americans. That's a great moment, I have to celebrate.

Q: Do you want to stop for a minute?

A: Okay. It's one of the joys, memories. I couldn't believe it. He came back and within hours we heard some people were moving, rushing, we went down to the highway, we saw American tanks rolling. You couldn't see anybody, you just saw the tanks, they were closed up. Blancka and I stand next to the fields and suddenly one of the roofs of the tanks opens up and a young soldier, American soldier, in Yiddish which he thought was German, so he says, Fraulines! Fraulines! Fraulines! We had to make now, Munich, he wanted the road. So we hear this German Jewish and to say, Yidden! Yidden! Yidden! We're Jews! Well he is, but he has to keep rolling, so he throws us two cartons of cigarettes, of the cigarettes the war was over, you know? Well, I go back and I figure this the end of my working for the Germans. Although the war was still going on, but I'm not going back to work there. I went back and I refused to work, but I still have my little room. So, Herr Professor in his civilian outfit by then, it was like a diminished man, an unbelievable change, what happens to the uniform, the high ranking uniform when you have to leave it? He comes up, the Herr Professor, this is his wife, he sends her up to talk to me. And he wants me, he's concerned that his wife said I'm not working. And that he wants me to, he wants to know what my plans are. I say, I don't know, I guess I'll go back to Poland. So he says, you know what? It's not so good for you to go back to Poland. After all you're an ethnic German, the Poles may not treat you so well. I said, I'll take a chance. He says, but I have a better plan for you. Here in the village is a mort-k-eye (ph), a store of smoke products. I have contacts there, they know me well, they will arrange for you to be a sales girl there. You will have a _____. And he notice along these lines and I figure I'm crossing inside and finally I say to him, Herr Professor, you know what? I'm neither falk-stoich-er (ph), nor Polish, I'm a Jew! And tall as the man is, he stretches out on the floor and fainted! And my floor was smooth because it was a maid's room, an attic maid's room. Well, he revived. He went down, this was the end of my job. No more talking about jobs or anything. I don't know how they dealt with that news, I have no idea because I realized at that point the danger soon to be there. Although the Germans occupied the city by then, I didn't know how much they occupied. They were marching.

Q: You mean the Americans were marching?

A: The Americans, yes. So I figured something may happen. A night or two nights before, he wanted me to dig a hole in the garden where he put some guns. He hid guns there. And Blanca's people hid wine. Bottles of wine. They were prepared for the Americans, you know, so the Americans may want, he hid guns there. And I figured it's not good for me to be there at this point. We didn't know where to go. I said to Blancka, I say, I'm not working anymore. She says, I'm not working either. We go down to look at these tanks and the tanks keep rolling, but we have no money, there's no money, there's nothing to buy. We went into town, everything is closed. Heidelburg is totally closed up, not one store is open. And so we decided to live in these fields near the highway. We slept there and we ate grass. I'll never forget after the war, the first few days we ate grass. It's hard to believe it. We decided not to go back. And there was nothing to do but on the third day I think we realized perhaps we could do something with these cigarettes. So we walked into town and indeed, we knocked at the doors and we told, cigarettes, cigarettes, trading something, and they gave us some food. Finally we found our way to a place, an American Red Cross club. That place was to serve donuts and coffee to American soldiers. It must have been within a week or two, I don't remember. We told the guys that we were Jewish and that we were slave laborers here and could they do something for us, could they give us a job? They agreed to have us serve the boys. So if I speak English in a funny way, that's the place where I picked up my English. I never went to school, this was my school. I served coffee and donuts and Blancka too. Was a great life. We got a furnished room because for the donuts we were able to trade. We brought dozens of donuts to a place where they had a furnished room all ready. Then we decided we need to learn English. So we went to a German woman who was a teacher of English. Gave her a dozen of donuts and she taught us English. To the beauty parlor for donuts, everything was for donuts because there was no food and we had access to as many donuts as we wanted to. So this put us on our feet. One day, a man comes in, in an outfit from Auschwitz, I didn't know about Auschwitz, I had no idea where he was from, but he wore one of these pajamas and he told us he was in Auschwitz, told us his story. And he says, he needs to talk to the military governor, he needs some document to go and find his wife, but he doesn't speak English. So I said, I speak English, I'll

take you there. I come to the military governor and he has refugee assistant and I interpret for this man and the military governor turns to his assistant and says, what language does she speak? That was my English. I stopped going for English lessons to this woman, she taught me in a way that was no English! I thought I spoke English. Slowly I learned the language and slowly a man came in from underground, Mr. Volinger (ph), and he started helping us in whatever way. Eventually, they organized, the American Red Cross organized a transport of trucks to go to Trencin-sch-stat (ph) and to bring back the Jews from Heidleburg, from, and they were in the _____. Heidleburg, Frankfort, Manchester, some other towns, Offenbach. And they ask if anybody speaks Russian, I volunteer to speak Russian. So they attach me, they put me in a uniform, some American soldiers uniform, and I go with them to Trencin-sch-stat (ph) and I say, before you go we have to cross Russian borders. We have to take cha-socks (ph), watches and a lot of Vodka. They don't understand, I say, trust me. That is what we will need. Well, the minute we cross the border into Czechoslovakia, they immediately saw these soldiers and they don't let us through. We need a stamp and that stamp, a round stamp, a green stamp. I say, don't bother with them, just give them the cha-socks (ph), well, they salute us, we go further. We get to Karlsbad, where my sister use to live. We come there, they cannot let us through because we don't have the right kind of a stamp. We have a square stamp, they want a round stamp. And I say, where is your supervisor? Oh, he's taking a bath. A bath? We'll wait. They say, oh no, he likes to be in the spa the whole day and the whole night. So, I figure that's no way, this cost a lot of Vodka and cha-socks (ph), but we went further. Finally, it was evening, we arrive in Tilsit-en-shot (ph), it's high up. This scene I'll never forget again. We come with a convoy of trucks, of busses actually. And we had a list of people who were deported to Trencin-en-shot (ph), hundreds of thousands of names, I don't know. They had, the Red Cross had collected it. There's a big, big courtyard, it's towards the evening, and we see people sort of sukkotking. These people were in a coma of dying. The Soviets brought in food which they couldn't digest. It was a terrible scene and I have that list and they cannot read the list, they don't know who's alive, who's not. Before I know, a Soviet policeman, a soldier policeman, puts his hands on my shoulders, he says, please follow me. He gets me into the big castle, an empty

room, a tremendous room in the castle. It's all dark. He says, wait here, I should wait. He locks the door on the outside and I'm all alone in that place. It was a horror. My only thought was, in the morning, the truck will pick me up and I'll go to Siberia because that was the Russian way. I didn't want to lie down, I was standing because I was afraid of rats. I was standing there the whole night, waiting for the morning to be taken out, no matter where. He comes in the morning, he takes me out, he brings me back to the American Red Cross. Until today, I don't know what happened. I assume, because I spoke Russian and I wore an American uniform, that they took me for a spy. Or perhaps these guys intervened for me, I still don't know. We came back with a handful of people, the worst of people from Heidleburg from these places. All I recall, when I crossed the border into German territory, I nearly kissed the land. That was how you do with Soviet Russia. There, I met two girls in Russian uniforms from my home town. They were in the army, they work with the victorious armies, they were marching. And they told me that they saw Blanca's husband in Krakow'. So, I told that he come back from Russia, so I went back to Heidleburg, I told Blancka about it, she could hardly wait. She wanted to go to Krakow' to meet her husband, naturally. So we both leave the job at the American Red Cross. There was a big repatriation movement then, they were patroiting all of these people to Poland and there was a truck load of Poles coming back from Germany as slave labors into Poland. And all that talk you hear is anti-Semitic talk in that truck. We were just about to cross the border into Czechoslovakia to go to Poland and I hear these comments and it was a stop for us. I say to Blancka, you know what? I'm not going back to Poland. I couldn't go back to Poland, I couldn't hear that talk. Here I was already in America, in a way, the American Red Cross. She was quite desperate about our separation, but she went, she wanted to find her husband. She comes to _____ herself later, she found her husband with another woman. He married a woman in Russia. Anyway, so I went back to Heidleburg. I stayed a while. Somehow or other, they had displaced persons camps, you know? I was going from one into another. One day, I work for Ohrdruf, from the Red Cross they sent me to Ohrdruf because I spoke languages. I knew a little English by then, I knew Polish, I knew German, so I was useful in an office. And somebody approaches me saying, is there a Maria Neider here? Maria Neider! Menek

phoned. He literally walked through Poland and Germany from, so this was, how do you know? It's Menek and he brought news that Frania is alive and he mentioned that they all came to Germany and I got them a house near Heidleburg because I had the rations, food, I had all that stuff. I'm in the uniform, you saw my years of _____. And they sent me to A-rose-en (ph), after I worked in Frankfort first. Frankfort on Hurst, that was the only building that was the G.I. farm and factory. The only buildings the Americans left intact in Frankfort because they thought they'll need it for their military government later, so it was. So I worked there, Menek found me there. And then they transported all of unknown people to A-rose-en (ph). They had the Germans leave the city, this was a suburb of the city of Castle (ph). There was big castles there, big village. And Own-Rae (ph) took over the town. And they sent me there and I had an apartment with another woman from America, she was of Polish origin, Maria Leiberskint. We lived there and life was pretty good. And my sister lived in Heidleburg, I would commute and bring food, I would always bring all these things. I had a very interesting job, it was in the tracing, we were tracing children who were dispersed into Germany. No Jewish children were in question. But representatives of different governments, Polish, Yugoslavian, Hungarian, Croatian, you just name it, they came to our zone to claim the children. They wanted to find their children. And the job of the Onrah (ph) personnel which I supervised for no good reason but that I knew the languages and I had an education, all of this worked in my favor. They were field workers to find children. Many of these children didn't speak any of their native languages, you had to identify them by some symbols or whatever. Sometimes they uttered a word, sometimes they wore a cross which looked like a Slavonic thing. Some of these things, we found many of them. And we would always bring them to the attention of these liaisons from their countries and they were shipped immediately to their countries. Today I am not sure I would do that as easily because you wanted to put children and were already observed by German families, what that separation meant, but those days there was no question that these children have to be removed from Germany, the belong to their families. Sometimes the families were not available, but they belonged to their nations, to their countries. So these things, my staff went to schools to find them, to churches, to orphanages, certainly it was most difficult with

families because families didn't want to tell us and it was detective work to find, because these kids were so assimilated into Germany that they spoke German. Depending on the age too, all the children we could find easily. This was my job for a very, this was 1945, 1946, and there was plenty of food. I had a uniform of an American, Under Second Class because the First Class was those who came from the States or from the other countries. These were Second Class, locally hired people, but we had all the privileges. And one day, a man comes and sits with me in that restaurant there where we had very good conditions, we had a PX, privileges, cigarettes, coffee and so on. And everybody was exchanging them for all kinds of goods. I started smoking, I became addicted then. And the coffee I use to bring to my sister so she had something, anyway, I fed a whole family on this. But, one day, a man in another type of uniform sits next to me and to begin talking. He said he's a president from the Joint Distribution Committee, and he says, as I talk to you, you belong to the Joint. This was the end of wandering for me, I go to Stuttgart to work with the Joint.

End of Tape 2

Tape 3

A: Okay?

Q: Let's see, you've now changed your job to JDC?

A: Yes.

Q: Tell me something, was JDC one of the places that, or group that were going into Poland to try and find Jewish children who were or had been in hiding?

A: Not at that point at all. That's modern history. Joint Distribution Committee was established as part of Onrah (ph), they were administered and dependent on Onrah (ph). Their job was to identify, rehabilitate and help with the settlement of all the Jewish victims of Nazism. People were coming out of concentration camps so they established, and from Poland some came, from other countries. The large concentration of Jews who survived was in Germany. The others we didn't touch, that was Russia by then. From all the concentration camps, from all the death camps in Germany. In Germany there were no death camps, but concentration camps, they all came to the bigger cities of Germany. Particularly they gravitated towards the American occupied zone, which was Frankfort and Heidleburg and so on. Some went to the British zone, those who were liberated from Bergen-Belsen. Very few wanted to be in the Russian zone and very few wanted to be in the French zone even, but some did. There were concentration camps in the French zone too. Anyway, it was a job of the Joint to find these people, start feeding them, locating their relatives perhaps in other countries, help them with immigration, so they took out the Jewish displaced persons from the other camps because there was quite a bit of anti-Semitism in these camps. And they brought them into their own camps, they established Joint camps. You know, the anti-Semitism in these camps was an interesting phenomenon. And they hired me as a second status employee of the Joint. I also had to wear a uniform. I was extremely absorbed in this work. It was to me one of the great experiences of my life, to be able to serve people who survived. I knew little about the concentration camp experience, they didn't talk about it. My job was mainly to help them with immigration. I was stationed in Stuttgart, they brought me to Stuffgart. The Director of that office was a Flora Levine, an American woman and I was her assistant. And I recall hundreds of young people standing in line

trying to get to me to get a referral to the visa department because I had to process them, help them. I also helped with some of the counseling problems if they needed it. I spoke German, I spoke Yiddish, I spoke Polish, I was ideal for this job in this respect. It was a job of great satisfaction. I couldn't stop working, I worked literally day and night and everyday I would take these documents to the American Consulate in Stuttgart and he would put a stamp and here was a visa. One of the jobs was also to help them reunite with families in America so they would get affidavits. This is another long story. We worked very closely with what was Ny-anni-no (ph) and then was called United Service for New Americans, and Patrick was director of it, a matter later in another capacity. It was extremely committed and devoted work, I've never worked for an agency in which were such commitment. I found a boyfriend there, we were suppose to be married, I later decided I didn't want him. He followed me, I mean, he was an American social worker from Brooklyn, and we met later in the United States but by then I withdrew from the relationship. It was a period of extreme investment and work and helping and I've never been in this situation before. My _____ was suppose to lead to teaching in the gymnasium level. Somehow or other, this was social work. I didn't know it was social work. So I represented the Joint in different places. One of the places was to go to the deport camp, sometimes for whatever problems. I traveled around the displaced persons camps in all of the American zone. I had to go to births, I had to go to a wedding in the camps because there was tremendous activity in terms of marriage, in terms of having children. Nobody understood at all and years later I understood, it was part of the need for replenishment, for not being alone, for not facing the new world all alone, so that everyday there was a wedding, everyday there was a birth and I was a representative of the Joint, I was invited. Once I went to a very meaningful, extremely sad occasion. In Bergen-Belsen, I think a few months after liberation, perhaps a year after liberation, the Palestine Agency send a monument to be put on the grounds of Bergen-Belsen. There was a reunion of all the inmates of Bergen-Belsen. I went as a representative of the Joint. This moment I'll never forget. When the Rabbi said Ka-dish (ph), there came a moan from the people, nobody cried. There was a moan, you could hear it on the steps of Russia. This stays with me, that moan of people. Nobody could talk, nobody could cry. There was, it was all in

that moan of people. Another time I remember that moan was, I just heard two years earlier, when in Bremen-hoffin (ph), when I was taking the boat to America, we stayed in Bremen-hoffin (ph) a few weeks, waiting for the boat. The boat in which I came was the Ernie-pile (ph), that was then name, these are military boats, broken military boats. And again, I was a representative of this, this I'll come to later because it was later. But anyway, so this was the work in the Joint. Extremely gratifying. They treated me beautifully, they send me once to Paris for a week of vacation. In those days, people didn't travel to Paris on vacation, I did. They send me to Switzerland once, anyway, it was all part of the job.

Q: Maria, you said that people didn't talk about their camp experiences. Did you try to get them to talk?

A: No, no, no, no. My friends boyfriend was a man who was the son of a, who came from a German concentration, it was in Dachau or Buchenwald, I can't remember. This was in Stuttgart when I worked for the Joint. And I accidentally met him and we stayed together for a while. We were very close to each other in every way. He taught me to play tennis. But, we never talked about his experiences. He told me about his father, who was a very famous _____ in Berlin, Bebo (ph) was the name. His mother was survived, he survived in the camp. We never talked about the camp. He was lately a symphony orchestra, associate directory of the Detroit Symphony. He always wanted to be in the field of music, he had a career ahead of him. I didn't know what I wanted to be. All I wanted was to work for the Joint for the rest of my life. I mean, working with people, this was like, this was a true sense of doing something valuable. Doing something meaningful after the job as a maid. This was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life, I didn't imagine I'll have another life.

Q: I'm trying to think of how to ask this question. In most people who have, including yourself, who have suffered so much and lost so much, and of course there's a desperation to begin anew. But there's also problems in trying to do it. Did you see, not trends in problems, but did you see certain kinds of things that women, when they gave birth, was this difficult for them to be having

children? Even though that may have been one of their deepest desires, and the relationships between men and women?

Q: I think there was tremendous group support which helped. These children were born in the sukkotdow of the chimneys, literally so. I still don't understand what courage these women had to start families. I still admire their courage. They forever have been psychoanalyzed as not loving these children because of the traumatic birth of these children. I have seen it differently, always. I think these families, these women survived emotionally only because of denial. Because they didn't want to think about it, because they didn't talk about it. And the power of denial can be very, very functional and adaptive. I always teach my students this, so we don't understand it. Very difficult to teach mental health practitioners about it. I do a lot of lecturing on the Holocaust and this is one of the major lessons. That denial can be a very adaptive mechanism, very helpful and very useful. In those days, the denial helped. My own denial, here I had such an intimate boyfriend. We didn't talk about his camp experiences. Here I interviewed hundreds, little more than hundreds of these young men. Some of them came from, one place only recently discovered, from the city of Radom. I knew they were from the city of Radom and I only discovered recently that the camp in which they worked was close to Stuttgart, so I got them all from Radom for some reason. But I wanted to know what their first name, their second name, what they want to do in America and all these things but we, where, what camp were they but the camp was a name and nothing else. There was no digging into it in any way. There was a young, beautiful woman from the Joint from Brooklyn, beautiful! She was the assistant of that man, my boyfriend, that, Omn (ph), the city of Omn (ph). And one day, a horrible thing happened. She stuck her head, she opened up the gas stove in her apartment in Omn (ph), she stuck her head in and suffocated. Nobody understood the nature of her death. I suspect that it was a very strong identification with the victims. Rebecca was her name, or her second name, I don't remember, but she should be remembered. But there wasn't suicides there, occasionally you heard a displaced person, a Jewish displaced person killed some German. It was all rare. The movement was towards life. The pain would arrive, Sukkot-bot (ph) evening in lighting candles. And naming a child. This was the most painful decision for most families. How

do you name a child? A Jewish child is named after dead family members. How can you name a child a hundred names? These were the big decisions and the big pain. You named a child where a boy could have had a name of a woman, of a mother. But these young people, they tended toward denial to an extreme extent. Some of it later in life was dysfunctional, but at that point, it helped having a marriage. I had to attend many marriages, I was a representative of the Joint. Having a Rabbi at it, having a little party afterwards, having a birth, getting visa, getting together on that boat. My sister got on the boat, and her son and her second husband. She married in Krakow' right after the war. He adopted the child and here they go together with Menek to America, okay? On one of the boats. In the winter of 1946, I certainly helped with the arrangements, this was my job. And here in Bremen-hoffin (ph) and I get a frantic call from Menek. What happened? He was on the boat and waiting, you were forever waiting for the boat to arrive and on the boat you were waiting for no good reason, you're waiting. These were all military boats, hundred of Jewish displaced persons. Many Jewish people. This was the Truman quota. We had no relatives in America. Nobody could sent us an affidavit but beginning of 1946, Truman offered a certain number of affidavits and we were included in it. That's how I came to America. And so did my sister. What happened, they called out Menek's name to come to the pursers office. There he was told that retroactively the Stuttgart consulate noticed in viewing his x-rays that he had tuberculosis and he's not permitted to enter America. They removed him from the boat. Here was an orphan, both his parents were killed. My sister was on her way. I ordered my visa to go a few weeks later. Well, I picked him up in Bremen-hoffen (ph), I brought him to sanitarium in German. A horrible thing, sanitarium for tubercular conditions, all Germans in the Sch-wa-daltz (ph), in the Black Forest. He was terribly sick, all he wanted to die. Every Sunday, this American boyfriend of mine and me went to visit him. Bring him food. He always pleaded with me to take the food back. All he wanted was a pill of cyanide. Every Sunday night I would go home with that pain, what to do? Eventually, I extended my visa. I got him through the Joint into Switzerland, into a Joint sanitarium near Lu-gone-au (ph). There he got better, he got well. American wouldn't let him in, it had to be five years after the illness is arrested totally. So we got stuck in Switzerland and the Swiss didn't

want him and America didn't want him. There was no money and he was hungry often. We were in America by then, we would send him a little money, very little, we were making a little money, but we sukkotred. One day, he advises us there is a new drug out, they say, his lung was collapsing, he had _____, everything. People were dying, all these kids from Auschwitz. They were teen-agers, they were dying left and right. He knew he was going to die, but he heard there was a new drug called streptomycin. Can we send it. 1947, streptomycin had a tremendous price for us. We couldn't, it was still experimental, whatever, we couldn't afford it. Somehow or other we made it and we send it to him. This began his healing process. The Joint had ideas that you have to train these young people for jobs that are available so according to them, this was the time that they needed book binders. So he went to them to become a book binder. Since then, I've always been telling my students that you have to do rehabilitation towards not what is available but as part of the value system and his value system, a book binder was not for him. In his value system there was a professional, to be a businessman, a professional, but not a book binder. So he didn't like book binder, they kicked him out, they didn't want to entrance him. That was the Joint, but eventually they helped him a little bit, very little. The Swiss police was after him all the time, when is he leaving the country? Finally he got a little better, he got himself into the University of Brussels, he passed tests! Believe it or not, he passed tests. He didn't know the languages but he had a good mind for mathematics, for chemistry, he was a very learned person, but I still don't know. They accepted him on a trial basis. He graduated Cum-sad-laud, Smugla-cum-laud I remember, in Switzerland. Many days he was hungry there. The Jewish community of Switzerland was very ugly. They didn't want to help these kids at all. He had a close friend who is now a doctor in, he retired, but he was a doctor in New Jersey. They had no money to live on. They were hungry. So the Jewish community in Brussels decided, no, he was in _____, decided that they get them a night job to guard in the cemetery Jewish bodies since the people brought at night and they cannot be buried, they needed a Jewish guard. So these two kids, who came out of the Holocaust, they gave the job. I'll never forget it, I'll never forgive them for it. The Swiss Jewish community. They have no sense. They were horrible to, total lack of charisma, total lack of passion or anything, so

they give them this job. So, this helps them a little bit. A Jewish woman, a survivor opened a little kitchen, a kitchen where she fed, we sent a little money to this person. But anyway, despite all of it, he was apparently brilliant, we didn't know it because he was not a great student in gymnasium. The motivation was how he did so very well. And every year they would tell him he's not ready yet to go to America. Finally, finally after many, many years he came to America. By then he was established in Switzerland. He had a degree, he started working. He hated America when he came but he made it eventually. So this is the aftermath period, is really not known well and I'm very glad that they're beginning to teach a little about it. This was a period of extreme stress but stress which was pushed down. Stress which was swallowed. To run away, my own trip to the United States was September 24th, 1947. I came to Bremen-hoffin (ph) and the boat wasn't ready. The boat had not come yet. So what do you do on September 21st, whatever it was, in September in Bremen-hoffin (ph), everything was closed, you couldn't buy anything. I had a lot of German marks because German marks were very available. So I remember, I wanted to spend it before leaving. So I went to a beauty parlor and I got a permanent. And it took so hard work, I came to America, I had to pay $10 to remove it. But this is the way, what money meant in those days. I got on the boat and the Joint assigned me as an escort to the people there, which means I had to be responsible for them getting, each one getting $10, each of them getting a prayer book, in time for the Holidays, each of them making sure that they would get kosher food. I had to be distributing, I was the mach-hack (ph). I was still a young woman but I had these jobs, as a representative of the Joint. I recall sitting on that boat and waiting, finally the boat moved. The anchor was cut, this is another memorable moment in my life. Suddenly when the anchor was caught, it was cut. A moment came from the people on that boat, they realized this was, what they were leaving behind. They were leaving all their families buried there. And it wasn't important where they were going, but what they were leaving. This stays with me, this moment, these moments of separation stay with me. These are still the most difficult moments in the lives of survivors. But I recall distinctly the moment of Bergen-Beelines, I recall the moment of the anchor cutting. Then, I still feel that pain when I think about it because I didn't realize what that moment really meant. Leaving the

people behind. And going to American in those days, they swore they would never come back to Europe. Many, many people stuck to it, they could never go back to Europe. People were getting sick on the boat, it was a fourteen days ride. I was the only one to show in the dining room, there was marvelous food but there was, I remember this waitress that, eat more! Eat more! There was so much food. The Joint gave each of us $10, make sure to distribute everything. There was a guy who told me he use to be related to the, who makes candy, kosher candy in America, who was it? Not Manaschevits, who was the other group? I forgot, no the other bar, you know, the Jewish. He told me that for the rest of my life that I'll be getting chocolate from them, I never did anyway. People were already beginning to think, but you know they got very sick, they were laying sick. They could take the seaside, er, ride. I was well up to a point, the last few days I was sick too. And then suddenly there is a great, jubilant voice all over. We see the Statue of Liberty. This too are great moments. It was Saturday night and they wouldn't unload us because on Sunday the workers didn't work at the dock or whatever it is. It didn't matter. We were all well by then. People's sickness stopped since the voyage stopped. And that Statue of Liberty was the greatest sight in the world! Well, I was, my sister was there waiting for me, and my brother-in-law and another friend, they took me to the Bronx, they had an apartment. They wrote me to Germany, they live on Garden Street in the Bronx and I thought it was a palatial place. Right across from the zoo. I saw them barefoot.

Q: Where, near the Bronx Zoo?

A: Yes. Right across, off Southern Blvd. between 183rd Street. I had the bare feet, I walk up, a horrible place, but anyway, all I wanted was to run back, but where do you go back, ever? Well, eventually it worked out. We were struggling financially, very much. Sending half of our earnings, went to Menek later because for weeks he was hungry there. It is unbelievable. The Swiss Jewish Community, I cannot forgive for it. But then I got a job, I immediately got a job. I don't know how immediately I got the job. The Joint send me to the Knights of Jewish Appeal. By the way, later on I suddenly get a check of a lot of money, $1300, in 1947, $1300 was a fantastic amount of money in my book! They paid me for the time I worked in Germany. They never told me they would pay

me. This happens to be their good personnel policies, this I found out later. Loy-ja (ph) worked for them for years. She still feels it, she has been treated extremely well. They send me no job, they send me to the Knights of Jewish Appeal as a clerk. Very dull work, terribly dull work. But I remember the day when a telegram was sent to every employee, that they reached their quota of $250 million dollars, in 1947, signed by Morgan-tow (ph). Henry Morgan-tow (ph) was the chief of the UJA then. And here it said that the executive director was Henry Montor (ph), I don't know if you know the name, it was a big name in those days. You deal with forty, sixty bro-ter (ph), Henry Montor(ph) was in charge of the UJA. One day, he has a fall out with his, with Morgan-tow (ph) so they had to separate. So Morgan-tow (ph) remains as the director of the UJA and Montor (ph) goes to another organization called the Palestine Economic Operation. They have been in business for a long time, about the waterways in Palestine. The Director of Personnel at the UJA, Montor (ph) took her with him, to the other organization. And she took me. So I ended up there. It was in a hotel which doesn't exist anymore across the Waldolf Astoria, it was a fine job, the rooms were air conditioned. They made me the archivist there. For some reason I like it because I was very quick in getting the files they needed. It was a good time until one day I had, I lived already in the city by there, until one day I get this call from the United Service for New Americans, which is known NYANA, New York Association for New Americans. They've always been in the business of helping refugees. And they say, when I first came to America I had one visit with them, asking for work, and they said, what I want to do? So I said, what I want to do was what I did for the Joint in Germany. They say, oh no, this is social work, for this you need a degree. They were stupid because I had languages and all these displaced persons they were serving they needed a person like me that spoke these languages, they didn't even stop. So they say, a new school of social work is opening up in Adell-fy (ph) and the Dean was with honor in Austria and he wants to give a Jewish scholarship to a displaced person. And we have many, many candidates who are more qualified than you are, but we will include you if you want to. I thought about it, I didn't want to give up the job, I had a good paying job. This was another experience, which doesn't exist anymore. Since it was a new school, they had to be more pious than the Pope. So they interviewed each candidate for

six days, for five days. Every day another interview. Until it came to Dr. Serrett (ph), who was a very famous psychiatrist for the National Schools of Social Work. I didn't know a thing about social work. And he interviewed me, he wanted to know my childhood and everything. Just to put it on record. They were so limited, they never asked me about my Holocaust experience. My childhood, my relation with my mother, my relation with my father, my relation with my siblings. This took hours and hours, everyday an interview. The final one with Dr. Serrett (ph) and he apparently approved so I got in. But to the sukkotme of the psychiatry profession, that nobody asked about the Holocaust. It was a non-subject in those days. This was 1949, 1950. Well, for some reason he chose me and I got in and I was very unhappy. I didn't understand what this study was all about. He usually came from the study of sociology, psychology, I was student of Polish literature. They talked language which I didn't understand and I figured, how can I withdraw, how will I get my old job back? It was very painful to me until the second semester, things began to go extremely well, let's put it this way. Nothing helps like a little success and a teacher just read my paper, which I thought was nothing, they all thought was excellent. Anyway, it was great and I was graded very well. So this is how I got into the profession. I had no money. I lived in a, it was amazing, with a Jewish family in, near Columbia University. Six dollars a week, I remember. I didn't have enough money to live. My scholarship was paid by the University but there was a foundation for Jewish girls and they were giving me $25 a week, which would have lasted except that my field work in social work, three days a week you have to be in the field. And this idiot arranged my field work to be New Jersey. So I had a lot of expenses and the school was in Adel-fy (ph) so $20 or whatever, $18 of that money went for travel. When I was finally selected by the committee to enter the school, the dean congratulated me and he asked me whether I want to study case work, and I didn't know what case work was, so I say, what does social work have to do with cheese? Because case in German means cheese! He started laughing and was still laughing when I left, this was my preparation for social work, but I made it. And I did well. My second placement, they helped me, also in New Jersey. They couldn't find a place for me in New York, they were very stupid about it. It was in a State Psychiatric Hospital. Which means that I had room and board

there. I lived there, and every psychiatric condition I immediately absorbed as my own. So one week I was schizophrenic, the next week I was manic depressive. It was very hard on me but it was the second year and I hadn't done very well, so I graduated anyway. Since then I've had good jobs and been a social worker since then. I retired. I actually worked for Washington, for the Federal Government, I worked for nine years for the National Institute of Mental Health. These were special projects and drug addition. And I was a supervisor in a big agency then and I use to commute and come to Washington and they were very large with money. This was the end of 1950's, early 1960's. Johnson's programs spent a lot of money for rehabilitation, for human services. They insisted I should travel first class because I had a high rank, GS-12 in those days were the high rank. It was not becoming for a person with this GS grade to, not to go in important ways. Anyway, there was a lot of stupid money spending. We didn't rehabilitate too many people I can tell you, but it was an easy job and prestigious job. They sent me to be trained at Lexington, Kentucky where they had the United States Public Health Hospital for tubercular diseases later on. Our job was to visit every agency and hospital in New York City, open up the doors for drug addicts. We did it, it was a whole new thing. A new ball game for me totally, but we accomplished a lot in this respect, not that drug addicts were not rehabilitated easily but I have been involved in it for many years. And then one day, again, I was re-married in 1962 and my husband was a teacher. He had long vacations, he wanted his wife to go on vacations but I only had four weeks. One day we came back from a summer vacation, there's a letter from the then Dean of the School of Social Work at Tall-a-dot (ph) who remembered me because he was my research professor at Adel-fy (ph). It was a new school then, he asked that I join the faculty it was that easy. In these days, you would have to have all kinds of qualifications. What happened, somewhere or other, for many years after I graduated, they used that paper for a record to teach from so they remembered me this way. It was very hard at Hunter from the first. I didn't want to give up my job as an AMH but they were very generous with me so they permitted me to work half time only for five years. The first five years were full time, and then four years later, half time for Washington and half time for Hunter and then the Washim Project came to an end and they paid me, I still get a little pension from them, which is

nice. I belong to the Federal Employees Retirement Section, or whatever it is. So, I've connections to Washington no doubt! I've been at Hunter from 1962, first five years were half time. And I went there, I retired in 1970, my marriage dissolved in 1970, we separated for the new divorce and in 1974 he died. He was younger than I, he got leukemia and he died. And I retired from Hunter in 1989, but I still teach the Holocaust course so I remain very much in, connected to the Holocaust course. I started it on my sabbatical year because I was emotionally more ready to confront that material. Until then, it was always with me, but I couldn't quite read. I started digging into it and since then I cannot leave it, now and forever involved in it.

Q: What year was that?

A: This was, my sabbatical was 1978 and I started teaching in 1979 and I have been teaching it still since. It's always been an important part of my life and since then I have been lecturing all over because it's the only school of social in the country which offers it, which is unusual. Yes, which is very unique, so I'm still with it.

Q: Were you unhappy to leave the case work that you were doing and go into teaching? Did you do it because your husband wanted you to do it?

A: By then I was not doing any, I didn't care, I was a supervisor. I had a big job, I published, I wrote something on drug addition and I didn't want to leave because it was a very well paying job at that point and it was a prestigious job. My husband wanted me to but this was not the major thing. I was not a little woman ever in my life. I think my parents sort of made me feel I'm okay and this really helped I think. I've never succumbed this way, but my husband wanted it. What was very nice was the prospect of long vacations. We always traveled for ten years which was great. But, no, there was always something in teaching that was prestigious. I didn't think they would take me but they did and there were lots of times there too, all kinds of politics in the University so I don't need to tell you about it, very often they want me out. Eventually I made my way in and eventually I did well, but I had rough years there too. The work was overwhelmingly big, a lot of work. And there's so much competition there. If you were on good terms with one, the other one was angry to you. Not because of me but because of perhaps they didn't like the other person because politics of

the University are something to write books about. But basically, it's a decent school, it was a decent school and of all the jobs I had there admissions work, you know, you do everything. I had faculty advisement. The favorite thing for me was always teaching. I liked accompanying the students and this saved me always, always. There were rough years too. When I retired they did something awfully nice for me. They established a collection of Holocaust literature in my name. And it's there which is, and I wanted it in the name, I had a conflict of which name it should go, I wanted my parents too and I wanted my husband too. So first we had it Maria Herr Schneider Rosenbloom, they said, but what became Maria Herr Rosenbloom. And occasionally I lectured from it, books I bought, that is continuous sort of input which is great, couldn't be better. My parents will be remembered this way, my family will be remembered this way, it's marvelous I think. But since then I've always been in private practice a little bit. But always Holocaust related.

Q: Private practice?

A: Yes. Always Holocaust related, always. The first time I work with Holocaust survivors was in a psychiatric, I was working in psychiatry because it was a natural thing for me. I was trained in a way, so my first job was the psychiatric clinic of the Bathesda Hospital. And there I was the only Yiddish speaking person, none of the psychiatrists spoke Yiddish, or wanted to speak Yiddish. So I was very much involved with every patient, nearly every patient. Many of these people were considered refugees from Europe. These were all concentration camp survivors. Nobody knew the term. I remember many, many fantastic situations from there. One man refused shock treatment so they sent him to see me, see Miss Schneider. Because I speak the same. And in my stupidity I thought, why not? He says his mother-in-law disapproves, I said, I'll talk to your mother-in-law. And his boss, he doesn't want his boss to know, so I say, okay, I can talk to him too. I exhaust all of the possibilities and he says to me, to tell me the truth. I don't want to make con-a-des-ot-rich (ph), shocking, no, electric shock treatment of me. Some of these scenes were unbelievable. One woman, this I'll never forget. She should be remembered somewhere as a result. One woman, an _____ from the Lower East Side, I didn't know her background very much, but she told me that she needed an apartment. They were in a horrible walk up and they so needed to, it was very

difficult, it was after the war, apartments were not available. So I did everything possible to move this family. Finally, on Grant Street on the Lower East Side, projects came up. Lower income projects and I got an apartment for them in a new building. With elevators, with everything. The day they move, to move, she runs into the clinic desperate, insisting she must see me. Crying, falling down on the floor. I've never seen such, what happened? She cannot live there, she moved in and she, I have to being her back to the old place. She cannot live there and I don't understand what was going on. This goes on for a while, that she cries, I must do something for her, she doesn't want to live there anymore. She didn't say commit suicide, but she doesn't want to live anymore. Finally, I still didn't understand, finally she says, the incinerators. I, that was a moment of awakening for me. I didn't know about this revulsion, nobody talked about these things in those days. She could not live with the reminder of Auschwitz. She couldn't live with the incinerators. So, this was a point of learning for me. Then I started taking histories which included the history, until then, he was born in Chop-kov (ph) and Poland and he went through the war, he was in a camp, he was in a war camp. That was the level of knowledge. But since then, I've got a lot of experience. For four years I worked in psychiatric clinic. Gave me a lot of experience in working with survivors. One woman left her child in the hospital, she didn't want the child. I went on a home visit, she and her husband thought, she delivered there, they didn't want the child. Who would defend such a thing? And then I heard them speak. She was in a camp and she saw some horrible fate of children. And he was so identified with her that he literally repeated all her words and all her ideas, he assumed all her ideations. In those days we had a term for it, a-folly-adert (ph), he thought exactly like his wife. So these were things none of the doctors understood any of it because it was a non-subject. The Holocaust was a non-subject truly until Ish-metz (ph) story came through. I was very lucky to have this experience and I always stayed with it in a way. I started attending meetings. There was some, what was his name? A psychiatrist, Christal (ph) and Freidel-lander (ph), they began to talk about it. And then when I established a course I became very much devoted. But I've always had patients of this background, very few, but always to see some people with this kind of background. I still see one, what do you call it? Load-man-ish (ph), doesn't really

matter really, you know, but I've always kept a foot in the door with this so I've been always into it. It helps in my teaching. I need to bring the past experience, _____ the survivor agencies. I never left the Holocaust. It's strange, but somehow or other, it became a central part of my life. I am sure the central part of every survivor's life, but I'm more aware of it. You never leave the Holocaust behind really. Those you see or those you don't see. Those who talk and those who don't talk. It is the same coin, it's just the reverse side. But if they don't want to talk or whether they talk obsessently about it, it's the same. You don't exorcise it, it is with you. Some remember, some don't want to remember. You don't want to remember because it's so central to your life. The pain is so strong. Sometimes people don't stop talking about it. With me and with all of us it has been a central, we are very aware of the centrality of this experience in our lives. The question always arises how is it possible, you know, but you can build on the trauma. I always think of the Mexican cities, the Mayans, who talk about these things. You can build on ruins, that be my point. You never resolve it, you don't work it through. I teach my students this way, it's new teaching to many of us, but they will learn it. You don't work through this kind of a trauma. You don't come to terms with it ever, I think. But you work on top of it and you try to build some meaningful lives. And this is really what's important, this helps you I think. Although I've seen many people have done very, very, obtained riches and I don't consider their lives very meaningful but they kept going. It's really building on top of the trauma, like building on top of a ruin. Starting up, what you're doing is there. It doesn't have to destroy your life, that's my point.

Q: So the meaning that you build is always above what happened? It's not that you integrated this meaning?

A: I don't think your fully integrated with the Holocaust ever. But I do think that to have, to give some meaning to it. To whatever you do, like our lecturing, people come to see you, you have to give testimony. We all find some meaning in doing something so the people will not be forgotten. This helps us. Now, I never feel that this is beneficial emotionally because survivors refuse to get any emotional benefits from the tragedy. But to find some meaning in it, either through remembering, through testimonies, through writing, through supporting the State of Israel, through

supporting the Museum. All of these things give some meaning and they help in going on, I think so. It's mainly helping in transmitting something to the new generations. But there are many victims of the Holocaust. People could never really start living again. Some have ended up in the State hospitals. I give lectures there, at Manhattan State Hospital, Lochin State Hospital, some of the doctors told me that they have casualties of the Holocaust for forty years, they came. Nobody understood it there. Their tragedies, nobody understood them or somehow or other nobody helped them and they may be there or may be dead but, many people have nightmares. My sister still suffers from nightmares. I have enough of repressive potential in me that I don't suffer from that but many people have nightmares, many people have suffered continuous migraine headaches, many people have extreme fears, many have many phobias. Many, many gastro-intestinal symptoms from eating glass which was put into bread in Bergen-Belsen. There are many, many physical and psychological manifestations but, by and large, while we have a large number of these people that are still alive, we have many more, we have many more who have done well. Who use this experience in more positive ways, particularly the second generation are very impressive this way. They try to give some meaning to their parental experiences. I teach along these lines, which means I don't deny the tragedy and I don't bely some of the consequences of psycho-pathology nature, but I think that the positives of it, the strength of survivors, is quite impressive. Even if they have conflicts of all kinds. Many have literally risen from ashes, let's face it. And have formed good families. In some families, the Holocaust has led to a lot of conflict, has lead to prejudices, has lead to exclusion. But by and large, survivors have had to pave the way. Take a look at the Armenians. They didn't have an Armenian Genocide Museum until the survivors built one in Washington, or whatever. We are taught a lot of people have suffered massive tragedies to find the meaning in the tragedy. I think that Holocaust survivors have truly lead the way to it. You and I, we are starting so much more.

Q: Let me ask you one question here. Given what happened after the Holocaust. If I just name, Cambodia or Bosnia, or Rwanda, Tibet. What, is there a conflict in you about the world you may have learned, maybe it was a lesson you never had to learn, about how wrong this is, but, there

seems to be something in the world that repeats. And now the world has learned how to do this. And it hasn't said, we won't do it. Only certain people have said it, we won't do it. Is there a kind of conflict in you about, what meaning can you create after the Holocaust if such things can keep repeating?

A: I'm not sure I know, definitely, I do not know. However, in my course, I integrate the lessons, like some of the experiences in Rwanda. The newest, at earlier times when I first started teaching, it was Cambodia. Actually, every one of these events triggers off the students questions about it, so I want students to look at it, that it continues. What will ever stop it I definitely do not know. I do not think it is a psychological thing, I think that it's in politics, in economics, in geographic dislocations, there are many, many things that brings it to that eruption. I think that Yugoslavia was somewhat of a different kind of ball game. I don't compare with it with Rwanda or with Cambodia. I have on my bookcase here a book from a girl who survived Cambodia. She has a Polish name, She-man-ski (ph) and she's of Polish parentage I think. You know the name? It's called, The Stones Cry Out. And it is as tragic as the Holocaust. And Rwanda certainly is, we're just so far removed. The lesson we haven't learned is to be identified, is to feel with them. Important as you are, I think affect is important, to feel is very important. This, I don't know very well, how we can transmit it. That it appears in the New York Times, a very few in this, and then it disappears. Some of these things should be held forever in the country for the people. We should never forget Rwanda. Whom do I know that really knows about it?

Q: One small question, at the end. For example, you mentioned a last name of yours, it appears, Schneider. Is that Schneider?

A: Neider, my husband's name. Never Schneider! His parents name has the German spelling which is N-E-I-D-R. His parents already Polandized it, an A-J. I had a job once in a very anti-Semitic hotel in the Androdic's (ph). These people hired me, they were Jewish people with a Jewish name, they hired me because my name sounded very non-Jewish, Maria Nedja.

Q: Maria, thank you very much.

A: Thank you for listening.

{Viewing pictures]

A: This is my father and this picture was taken sometime in the 1930's. I think he was in his late 40's then or early 50's, I'm not sure.

Q: What was his name?

A: Samuel Hirsch. Okay. This is a picture taken when I was an adolescent, I think, a teen-ager. To my right is my sister, Frania, five years older and to my left is Menek's aunt, his father's sister, she was killed in the Holocaust.

Q: Where is Menek?

A: Oh, Menek is sitting right there. Menek is right there at our feet.

Q: And who's the person in the middle?

A: That's me! To my left or to the left is my picture taken in early 1943 upon escape from the ghetto. I wear a Ukrainian shirt and my name then was U-lee-ana Gol-ska (ph). The next picture was taken a few months later, I believe. I had to change my name to Kash-e-mair Shul-ko-vif-ka (ph), both are 1943. This is my husband, Noonik Neider. This picture was taken sometime in the middle 1930's. He was killed on February 2nd, or a day later, 1943. This is my sister, Frania, and her son, I believe three years old. I think this was taken sometime in Re-volf (ph) in 1943, I assume so.

Q: And her son's name?

A: Her son's name, the Jewish name was Ale-ya-ho (ph), his name under assumed identity was Lash-ick, now he is Dr. Alex Gutterman. A professor of social work at Columbia. This is me in an army uniform in 1946 in Auto-en-sign (ph), Germany. This was called script money, it was money used by the American military personnel and those attached to them, like ANRA or the Joint Distribution Committee. It was not available to the population in general.

Q: Available in DP camps?

A: No, it was not available to DP camps, it was only available to people who were with the American army or the attaché' personnel like ANRA and the Joint, and it was possible for them to

use the money to buy in military stores called PX. This is our house in Kolomyja which I photographed, unfortunately, I cut off half of it. I photographed it in Kolomyja four years ago when I first visited for the first time after the war. It was an extremely difficult trip for me and when I walked up the staircase, I walked up and down, I couldn't quite make it to the apartment. Somehow or other I pushed myself extremely much and I finally went in. Downstairs in the olden days was the business. The first floor was occupied by the family and on top of the floor was a very big attic which was the maga-zeln (ph) where they kept all the business things. But too, this balcony was a very important part of our life. It was overseeing the car-so (ph) so we could see what was going on in town, who was dressed well, who was not, and so on. To the right, the right windows were what you called the salon or living room. To the left were the, was the bedroom of my parents. In the back were rooms which had no windows but sky lights. One of the rooms was considered the living room one summer and the other was the children's room. And in the back of that was a very big hallway which was used in the summer for all kinds of gatherings. On top of it was a tremendous attic and this attic I say was part of the business. Now we lived there, the apartment has been divided and was given right after the war by the Soviets, was given to their two Generals so, one of the General's still lived there, he didn't want to let me in and the other part belongs to a widow of the General. She too refused to let me in, but with a lot of persuasion from the guide, she did open the door. I could see inside, it was very neglected and I could see one of our rugs still hanging on her wall.

Q: What year was this taken?

A: This was 1992. I cut it up.

Conclusion of Interview.