

Good afternoon. My name is Nancy Kislin. I'm a member of the Kean College Oral Testimonies Project of the Holocaust Resource Center. We are affiliated with the Video Archives for Holocaust Testimonies at the Sterling Library of Yale University. Sharing the interview with me is Marcia Weisberg. We are privileged to welcome Lisa Reibel, a survivor presently living in Elizabeth, who has generously volunteered to give testimony about her experiences before, during, and after the Holocaust. Welcome, Lisa.

Welcome.

I would like to start this with telling us a little bit about your life before the Holocaust came. Where you were and your family life.

We lived in Novogradok. And it was Poland until 1939. And then Poland was the Jews had it very good. They got along nicely, and had schools, private schools, and different kinds of schools. And then you were free and everything was all right. But then 1939, came in the Russians. And then they had to change from a Hebrew school in Polish. We had to change from a Jewish in Russian. But in 1941, the Germans came in. An that is when all the trouble started.

Did you have brothers and sisters?

We came from a family of six. We were four children and our parents. My older sister got killed later on. I'll tell you later the way it happened. We reared the children. And we had it very well. My husband and my father had two beautiful businesses for us. And we used to make fur coats. And my mother was just helping him out. We had a maid. All four children went to private schools and in summertime to camps.

Everything was just beautiful. And my mother had a family, you know. She had three sisters and a brother. And we were a whole family. And from the whole family remained just my father, rest in peace. he died in '72, five years ago, and my sister Rae Kushner and I.

Your life in your town. What was the name of your town?

Novogradok.

In Poland?

In Poland. And then they had the shows, beautiful synagogues. It was a big synagogue and small synagogues. And life was just wonderful, Jewish shows and everything that you wanted to have we had when we were alive [INAUDIBLE].

How is your relationship with the Gentile community?

Well it wasn't such a good relationship because they were always jealous of the Jews. Even it seem like now, they are jealous of the Jews. And I came as super came in this week, you know, to my husband to talk something. So he says, Joe, what's going to happen if all the Jews are going to go to Israel. There won't being no banks, no schools, no apartments. You see. This is the experience. And he happens to be a nice man. So you can imagine what other people think about.

And I just wonder what kind of city was it? Where was it? Was it near Warsaw?

This was near White Russia.

Near White Russia.

Before it was Poland, but then it became White Russia.

It went back and forth. And then in 1941, the Germans came in.

So you spoke Polish and Yiddish?

Polish and Yiddish

Russian? Russian, yeah I remember a little bit but not too much.

How often did you go to a religious school?

Well I used to go to a school that had Hebrew and had Polish. And then later I had to have-- we had Jewish and had Russian.

You mentioned that this man mentioned Israel? Was that something that you and your family spoke about? Israel.

No. But we meant it he asked me if we wanted to go to Israel after the war. But this was the only place that they we wanted to go because we didn't have anywhere else to go. Because, in Israel, they didn't let you go. So then you went-- they took us in camps and tried to get us as much as possible close to the borders. Like you know In Italy and I like the border in Italy to get in Holland and say we wanted to give us a home for the Jews.

That was after the war though.

Yeah. This was after the war.

Let's go back.

What would you say is your fondest memory of your life in your town?

My school and we had a certain things. I was only about between 13 and 13.5 years old. And they came and we used to go away for the summer. Sometimes with our parents. And you had cousins you had family. Now, we have almost nobody.

You had grandparents?

I had a grandfather and a grandmother. My grandmother died when she was about 87.

Where was your father from?

My father comes from the same city.

And your mother?

My mother? I don't think so I'm not sure. But she wasn't. But then they moved in. She had a sister. So she came to her sister. Then she met my husband-- my father. And then she got involved. She went to marry my father. My father was poor.

And my mother side was very rich people. He said, I'll give you more money and find another fellow. So she was [? living. ?] She says, why do you have to give it to somebody else? Give me the money-- give him the money and it will be all right.

And then he made a good living as a--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

She took the money. My mother helped her out.

Who bought all the fur coats? Jewish ladies or--

Mostly.

Mostly Jewish ladies.

They didn't find much in the city. So you had to get and but then for one. And then they use to take them to a tailor. And they used to make them. It was made to order.

What did you do on Jewish holidays? Did you all get together?

Well yeah you get together. Then we used to go to the synagogue. The children used to play around the synagogue and in school

You were kosher?

Yeah.

You were kosher.

You had many Jewish girlfriends where you lived?

You're raised. You're born. And then you're raised with the same children that you were born with. My daughter has an eight-year-old son.

So he said, grandpa died. My father passed away five years ago, here in Elizabeth. So he was missing it so much. Every time, bring grandpa, bring grandpa, because he has nobody. My great grandpa.

So my daughter probably told him that grandpa's in heaven. So now my aunt died. You know, my sister-in-law died. Maybe [INAUDIBLE]. She died, so the little one says, mommy, maybe she can talk a little bit with grandpa about coming back. You know, he was the only one, you know.

You mentioned that your family would go on vacations in the summer. Where would you go?

It used to be like 30 kilometer, not too far. And there used to be a forest, because you used to play in the forest. And you know, the Shabbos was beautiful with the children, with grandchildren and with everybody. But when you have it and then you don't have it, you never forget it. Like I -- even my children know, they know lot about it. I asked, my older daughter, she said you going to make a tape in heaven. She says, mommy, there's the best thing I would love to get something.

You mentioned the Jewish theater.

Yes.

Did you used to go to see the plays?

Well, at that time I didn't go much--

You were too young?

Unless there was something for the children. But everything was on Friday nights. You saw in the city it's Shabbos, you know. People used to get dressed beautifully for Shabbos and go to shul [INAUDIBLE]. They had cantors you know. One shul was the biggest shul. It was called [PLACE NAME] And there were small shuls.

And where did you go to school? You say you went to private school?

It's called a [INAUDIBLE].

What do you remember--

The principal from my school saved his life. He lost his wife and the children, but he saved his life. And he lives in Israel. And somebody told me this. Only, he was a very handsome man, the principal. So somebody told me they saw him not long ago. And I thought that if I got to Israel again, it's what I would like to see is him.

Mm.

That would be nice.

What is the first time that you remember something antisemitic happening to you or your family?

This was in 1941. They used to say, kill the Jews, the Jews have everything.

Is that while you were growing up?

Yeah. You see, they had 6,000 Jews, but there were very little Christians Not too many. And this was like a little Jewish town.

Did you feel safe? Did you feel secure?

Mm, when you are kids, you don't realize so much. But the parents also didn't realize. Nobody realized that people could do something like this. It's not understandable.

You were very little, but do you remember the first time you ever heard about Hitler and Germany? What did you hear? Do you remember anything?

Well, I know in Germany there was a Hitler. You see, they didn't take us into any concentration camps like they had Dachau and Auschwitz. They did everything in the city, the city where we live.

Maybe you should tell us a little bit about when things started to change in your town.

The change started changing when the Germans came in about after two months. It was quiet, but you saw a different spirit against Jews. But there was somebody did something. They said the Jew. Everything they said on the Jew.

The worst part came when-- I told you, should I repeat what I said? I told you that in July 1941, the Germans decided to kill some Jews. And they had a lot of soldiers already, and you could see in their spirits, they were happy to do it. Not because the Germans told them to do it. People were happy to do it.

You say they? You mean the Polish police?

Yes. They didn't have much Poles. It was Germans. And then in 1942, the first thing they did is they said it to the police and more Germans, too. You have to go from house to house and see if you can find any professional people. I want 50 professional people-- doctors, lawyers. There was a lot of better educated people in our city. They used to go to another city maybe to finish college or law school--

To go to university?

But they were a lot of educated people.

So they wanted to pull out the Jewish professional people?

The Jewish, all professionals. The accountants, whatever you can get. But nobody expected them to kill them. Some went. Do they want me? I'll go. They didn't realize, this was the first thing that happened in our city. And then they picked out the 50 people, and they put them on the market. They put them face to face so I can't see the way he is shot, and he can see the way he is shot. And they killed them-- all the 50 people. And they weren't dead-- one of them moved a little bit, so they thought, maybe he's still alive, so they killed him again.

And the blood was falling, and there's nothing you could do. You were helpless. And so many people, like the wives or the children were standing in the window looking for their father or their grandfather, for their sons. And they were laying all dead in the market. And they let them stay-- lay there for a couple hours.

Til-- they let them stay for a couple hours. And a lot of Russian and Polish people walked around the market. like to see a show. Then after about three hours they ordered the Jewish people should bring in the vagrants. And they brought in three vagrants, and they put in each vagrants. You know, it was just like pieces of wood from the sides. And they put in the vagrants. The heads were hanging and the blood was pouring the whole road. And they took it to the Main Street, where the main synagogue was. And passed them, and then they reached the field. They said to them, you dig the graves. And to put them on the graves.

So when we saw the experience and what they are doing, we couldn't realize what they are going to do next.

What did happen next?

In December the 5th, they put signs on each pole. The Jews have to gather in the courthouse, because the courthouse was a little bigger building than a regular building. And they had a lot of rooms, a lot of exits. And they said in every house you have to go, take what you can, the Jew. But what can you take, or a dress or a [? poor suit, ?] What can you take? Anything. And everybody should come to the courthouse.

Next day they told all the people from the courthouse to come out in the yard. All the people was standing, like in a line. Because you couldn't send-- they put us everybody in the line. And the trucks were coming and they used to load these people and take it to the grave that they prepared for them.

And they made a grave. A grave, and in the middle is like some box, room. So you can walk. And they walk. And then when they kill-- when they shot you, all you fall to the right or you fall to the left.

Very neat. Neat. So what happened? You are alive.

It doesn't pay to talk so much about this, because there's so many people who don't believe it. They think this never happened.

We believe it and we'd like to hear about it.

So, after we got in line, and they were taking trucks. And we were standing, my sisters, my brother, my father, were standing in line. And then she says, my mother, to both girls. To Rae and other sister. She says run, one to the right, one to the left so at least one will remain alive. She said at least there's going to be somebody who will get out alive.

In the meanwhile, a fellow that went to Catholic school, a Catholic, he became a policeman for the Germans. He saw running Irene. He went inside. He took off her fur coat. She wore a beautiful fur coat, and took her out to get killed.

In the meanwhile-- and see how life turns? She was saved, so she was killed. In the meanwhile, came the police [? in the water ?] and the Germans came. And the [? Holland, ?] where's my furriers? So they said, the furriers are dead.

So my mother was standing there, so she said, my husband is a furrier. He says, where your family? Get together. So

then my brother, I, my sister, and my father's brother was standing with his wife, too. Them, she said, also furrier, and she took us in into the courthouse. In the meanwhile, they took us in through this door. And they pulled out my sister to kill her from that other door.

Older sister.

The one that this Catholic had pulled out and taken her fur coat. So why did they want the furriers?

To make for them fur coats, to fix it. They had-- later, they had to-- I'll tell you about this. So in 1942-- in 1941, was killed about 5,000 people.

Out of 6,000.

6,000.

This all happened in 1941?

1941.

OK.

Then they took us to a small place where there was Jews. And we lived there. And we used to go to work. Some people, they used to take like a 100 people to-- but the prison was in the back of it. And us, for instance we were working in [INAUDIBLE] we used to go to the court to work.

And there was a man. Suddenly, we get up one morning and we see there's a strange man in ghetto. And the German told me-- I don't know why he talk to me, but he told me you take care on him. So he lived in the office, you know. They brought him food, everything good, and I had to clean him and take care on him.

Was he an older man?

Yeah, not too old. Maybe in his late 50s.

You lived your whole family in one room?

This time we went-- she took us to another ghetto. There was like in a room. Because it was houses, little houses, and as many people could get in the house, so many people live there.

So how many people were in your house?

Maybe a lot. I can't remember.

Did the Germans appoint some of the Jews to be in charge of the ghetto?

Yeah. They appointed some Jews, and they became like policemen in the ghetto. If like every morning he wanted to count the Jews. They used to just tell them and they used to do it.

And when we lived there in that place, then they brought in from the small cities-- I have the names if you want-- from the small cities. And everything they brought in to the big city, to Novogradok.

And then one day the German-- this was in December and it was very cold-- and the German man. And he took all the care and the whole way things with the Jewish police. And he called up the Mr-- what's his name? Mr. Reiter. Reiter was his name. And he called up Mr. Reiter to the ghetto and he said send me in three people because I have to dig out-- they have to dig out the pipe because the water is too cold. It doesn't go through because it's iron.

So they went three boys. My brother. They picked my brother and two other boys. And they took him there to work and they was putting firewood on the pipes. They digged out the pipes first, and they put the wood there.

Then about 11 o'clock, so it's like New Years Eve, he started to drink a lot so he came out and wanted to have a good time. So he pulled out the three Jews. And he said stand up. Heil, Heil, Heil Hitler.

Then he says OK. He took out the gun, shoot one. He fell. Then he shoot the second one and he fell. And then was my brother. So he fell by himself. So then they shoot him. And it was just in here. A shot in the top of the leg.

And then he realize that he's alive. And they were laying on the fire. And my brother, too, was laying on the fire. And then he came again to check how everything is. And he saw them laying there. And he went away.

Then my brother got up from there. He saw it became very quiet. He hear nothing no more. So he got out and he started to crawl. So the police saw something burning. So they thought this was my brother. So they started shooting. And the pieces, this was the pieces from his clothes. It was burning. He tore it off.

And he went another place, and in the other place there was Jewish boys working. Because he was afraid to say that he's alive. And the two boys crawled up, and they brought the wagon. And they put him in the wagon and they put straw on top and they brought them in to the ghetto like this to us. And they said he's all burned. The whole side was burnt.

Were there any doctors in the ghetto?

Yeah. So he said then-- so we didn't know what to do, so they said the best thing put him in the hospital. So we put him in the hospital. And you can't realize how stupid they are, the Germans. Here he killed him, here he came in to the hospital and he said, is there a boy whose name is [PERSONAL NAME] Kushner?

They said, yes. You want? You know what, give him the best food. And everything the best. I want to see him cured. You couldn't realize yesterday he killed him, and today he wants to-- so they said probably he wants him to get well and then he'll kill him. He'll kill him when he's going to be well. That's what you realized.

So how long did--

Then we stayed in the ghetto, and they brought so many people. And it was--

How long was your brother in the hospital for?

I don't know, exactly.

While you were in the ghetto, did any of the Gentile people you had known try to help?

We had a woman that she lived in-- she worked for my mother in the house for about 16 years.

The maid?

So when we were at the first ghetto, she came over and she brought a loaf of bread to my mother. She gave her. And she said I'm afraid. She is afraid. And she never came back. But there was some Polish people that helped a lot. Like my husband. He was never in a concentration camp. He was never in a ghetto, and there are five of them that survived.

With the help of Gentiles?

Yeah.

That's interesting.

We write to them, we send them packages. We brought up one woman that saved the two sisters, my husband's two sisters. So he and his brother went down. She stayed with us a whole year. [? They ?] said in New York Times article, because it was the first time that the Jews brought up for people to help.

How did your brother-- I mean, how did your husband survive?

All by people. By Gentile people.

Being hidden?

Not only, helping the most. He went to hide in the forest, you know. But mostly is in food. This was the most important thing.

Right, to eat.

Can you remember anything about Kristallnacht?

Yeah, I know about Kristallnacht.

Did you hear about that while you were in the ghetto?

You heard a lot of things while you were in the ghetto.

I was going to ask you that. What did you hear and how did you hear these things?

They had probably a radio. One or two.

Somebody had a radio?

One or two. And we used to know.

And what did you think about the outside world? Did you think everybody knew what was going on? What was happening?

Well, a lot of people that saw it. They saw it. Like they saw killed 5,000 Jews. The suffering of young Jews. Killing the young Jews.

This was the first time that they killed her, killed the 5,000 Jews. And later on, when they gathered all of the people from the small towns, but they had the hospital. Then later, they killed them.

They killed them and they make a big parade, you know, for all the people. And then the small children that are still on top of the grave.

You see, can a human being do something like this? I'm nervous just saying about it.

Well, what happened? How did you get out of the ghetto?

So we were in the ghetto, and they had, at that time, a second [? slaughter ?] and was killed all the young people. About 6,000 people.

And then we went to-- we stayed in the ghetto, and was left only-- my mother was still alive. And my brother was alive. And my sister and me. And we stayed in the--



I beg your pardon. What's the question?

When did you leave the ghetto.

The ghetto. Oh. So then there was only 500 people left. 500 people left. So they came and they made a [? slaughter, ?] you know. And they took out and they left about 300 people. And I was saved by the German.

I said, look, I'm so small, I'm so skinny. I cook for you I clean for you. Please. Like, this everything. And he gave me a number. This was for life. And I ran over and I gave it to my sister, to Rae, the number. And I went again between the dead people. And walked over again to him. People were screaming. People was crying. People were begging, you know. It was terrible.

So when he saw, I ask him, you know I said again, I'm working good and I'm cleaning and he like looked at me and realized that he gave me a number, you know. He says, I want you to know, this is the last number. And he gave me a number.

He gave you another number.

And that's the way we saved ourselves. And then, a lot of people believe in them.

They said, you know, maybe God helped us. God want us to do it. And a lot of religion people saw it like this. Maybe God wants us to do it. Maybe this, maybe that. Everything. But when they saw that every-- some believed in the Germans. They said, look they killed them maybe. But they're not going to kill us. But they killed everybody over time.

So when there was 300 people left.

Yeah, left. So they were thinking about to get some-- get some guns and something and make a [NON-ENGLISH]. You know what a [NON-ENGLISH] is-- to run away. To--

Escape?

To escape, yeah. And they put wires around and everything. And there was about 50 young boys in the ghetto that was left.

And your brother was one of them?

Yeah, and I was there with my sister. But we didn't know they were building the tunnel. On boy, they were so intelligent, so brave, I can't tell you. He made out where the tunnel will start and where the tunnel will go out. Because you can dig here and get out in the ghetto back. You can dig here, you can get to the police. You can get all over. But they made a beautiful job.

So then we heard they are going to make Tuesday, they are going to make a Judenrein. You what that means? Clean from Jews. No more Jews. So Sunday night, together all the boys got together in the barracks. We slept no more in the courthouse, we had barracks, just wood and stone. And behind one barrack they digged out the hole and they made the tunnel. It was about 250 feet. [INAUDIBLE] metals. It's like three feet metal.

And they told us, listen. Tuesday they want to kill us. We are leaving tonight through the tunnel. So the people says like, tunnel, tunnel? They didn't hear nothing, you know? So they explained everything, we're not going to die no more like this. We're going to run. We're going to save ourselves.

And to point the line. Who should go first, who should go last because it's very dangerous. It's a very small tunnel.

Right. And it might collapse?

Might collapse is nothing. But if somebody feels bad and stops there then nobody can go out further. So they came to me and my sister Rae, and they said, listen. Your brother is going through the first ones because they dug the tunnel. But you and your sister, you can go after the first ones because we are young. But your father cannot go. So all you remain to stay with your father from the last ones, or you go alone.

So we said no, we going to go with our father. So we were almost the last, at the end. And they made one more mistake is they made light in the tunnel. So when we came out in the field you didn't see. You know, it was very hard.

How old was your father? About.

Well he died five years ago. He was 93. He never re-married. Never. He lived with us always. How old does that come out?

So, five years ago was 1982.

Oh my goodness.

So he was about--

So 1982--

He was about 50.

50. In his 50s.

And my mother was and little younger.

How long was the tunnel? Do you remember that?

Yeah, it was 250 meters.

What were you feeling when--

16 inches by 60 and they dugged out. And then it started pouring. They were afraid it shouldn't collapse.

How long did it take you to crawl out?

Not so long. Because everybody was crawling, crawling fast.

Was your mother still alive at this point?

No, my mother was killed within the 550 people.

And they just took her one night?

Yeah.

Now when you got out of the tunnel, who helped you?

We decided we're going to hold on. Whatever it is going to happen, we're going to hold on. Together. My father, me, and my sister. And there was my man who used to live in a village, and he knew all the roads and everything. So we begged him, we're going to walk with you. He says, no. No.

And we come up in the tunnel and we'll go with you because you know the roads and everything. And he wouldn't take

us. So when we were crawling, me, my sister, my father, we feel somebody is crawling. So we said, who this is, and this was that fellow. So my sister said, now we're not going to let you go. We're going to crawl together.

But nobody knew where they were going. There's about 42, maybe 43 boys, the first one that built the tunnel. They instead of going from the city to run, they caught them and they-- I think they burned them.

Now was your brother one of them?

Yeah.

And your brother was about how old at that time? 20?

Or younger. Younger than 20.

Now, how many Jews do you remember went through the tunnel? How many people escaped? It was about 289.

289.

I think so.

Did anyone remain? Did all the Jews go?

A lot of people remained. It was about 280. 270-280. So the boys got killed. And the rest one remained alive.

But did anyone say in the ghetto?

No. Just the Mr Mendelssohn we left. I worked for him. He was a spy for the Jews, you know. So I came in the office, and he said, why I don't clean today. I got up in the morning I say oh my goodness, today I'm going to get killed. I have to work yet. You know? No. So he came, he came he said that I didn't do today.

So I came in, I cleaned his bed, changed his bed, [INAUDIBLE] and talking to him a little bit. And I knew I'm going to leave in an hour. So I said because every time when I used to be there and the German used to come in, he used to say, what's new? So he used to see right away down there, and I used to sit down on the floor and burn the oven. You know, was standing little oven with the things.

So I knew. And we knew he doesn't belong here. How did he get here, everything. So we realized that he was a spy. So we left him alone. And they say I don't know exactly they say that the next morning, you know, the police came to the ghetto. They said they shoot a lot when the people were around. But then became quiet. They saw that the partisans came to get us. And that's when they killed a little bit. And then became quiet. So they stopped shooting. And the next morning, they come into the ghetto, there was nobody there.

Who were the partisans? Were they Jews and Gentiles?

There were several partisans. The groups. There were Gentile groups and there were Jews.

Some were Gentile and some were Jewish. Now, when you went into the forest when you got out of the tunnel, did they help you?

When we got out of the tunnel, we-- oh sure. They took us away.

Good.

The leader died last year. He was really leader. He brought back. They found out that the ghetto, we went out from the ghetto. So then right away he sent out soldiers all over. And they asked the Christian, and they had somebody probably

that they depended on him. So he said, if you see Jew, tell them to come here. Come here. And the station. Then came the partisans and they took us to the forest.

And we lived there. All right, not such a comfortable life or something. But after concentration camp, this was all right. And he brought back to the city 1,200 Jewish people that he saved. Last year he died. So you have a tape from it.

How long were you in the forest?

We were liberated in 1945.

So you lived in the forest--

About a year and a half.

A year and a half. And you lived outside most of the time?

No, but they had bunkers in the ground. Build it with straw.

Where did they get the food?

Well, the ones that was strong, they had a lot of-- [NON-ENGLISH]. I don't know how you say this in English. They had a lot of [? bullets ?] and guns. There was a lot--

Ammunition.

Had a lot of ammunition. And they used to take the stronger soldiers and give them a little ammunition. He used to go to the farm. It took a long time. And we went to the place that we stayed. It was about four days maybe and five nights because it was very far. That's why it was secure there. The Germans never came there. So they used to go and get butter and bread and everything. You know, and they used to bring it. All right, they maybe got a better portion, but we had enough to live on.

And what did you do during the day?

I used to make hats for the partisans. My sister got sick there and she stayed in the typhus, and my father got sick. So I came to visit. I say what do you want. She said, oh you know what I want? If I could have potato latkes. In the typhus, you know she was like dreaming.

So I went and I knew in one barrack they still had the peels from the potatoes. So I picked it up, I mashed it up and everything and I made her potato latkes. This is your life.

Tell us about your liberation. Who liberated you?

We were liberated by the Russians. 1945. They came, the commandeers and the horses. Big shots, you know. And they said, listen, we are getting-- we got liberated, and we should all stand like two in each row. And I'll bring you back to the city. And he was a big hero.

How old were you at that time?

Maybe 16.

16.

So then where did you go when you got out of the forest when you were liberated where did you go first?

We were liberated, and then we went back to the city. The house was broken down.

What did you find there?

Everything was gone. Everything. The clothes and everything and everything the houses, the Polish had. And that's all that they ask you. Are you still alive? When they saw you. When they saw you making the street, you know. And we came back. So that's all what they said.

Ghosts. You were a ghost.

Oh, you still alive?

Was somebody living in your house?

No, it was broken down. It was burned down.

So then where did you go.

Then we rented an apartment. We stayed there for a while. And then we went-- then we decided to go to Israel.

Why did you decide to go to Israel? Were there people?

Because our home was no home. And because, look what they did to the Jews. At least Israel, you know, it's a home going to be.

Were people in your town, other Jews, talking about going to Israel?

Yeah, people were talking about Israel.

Before the war, were there Zionists in your town?

Oh yes. Zionists.

What about your family? Were you Zionists? You believed in going to Israel.

But that time we didn't have no place where to go.

So you talked about going to Israel, and then what happened?

We hoped. Later, they brought us to Italy, and we stayed in Italy in a displaced persons camp. And we had to stay in the line, too, and soup a little bit. And a piece of bread. It wasn't so hard. We stayed for four years, and then we went to Rome.

Four years you stayed?

No, three years, maybe.

Three years in the DP camp. What did you do in the DP camp?

I was a dental. They were teaching you trades.

Yes, so what did they teach you?

I was a dental mechanic.

Did you ever use that again?

No. When I come here and I went to work and I had to support myself and help my father and pay for food and for a room, I leave the trade together. I wasn't married at that time yet.

So you went to Rome.

Yes, tell us about Rome.

I went to Rome and I stayed in the kibbutz. And the kibbutz was much better.

They had a kibbutz in Rome.

Yeah. And the kibbutz was nice. You know, somebody used to cook once a week. And you could go out in Rome, dress human. You know, very nice.

How did you feel the people of Rome treated you?

The Italians?

Oh, they were very nice to us. Very nice. Then we got some papers from the United States. My father should rest in peace, he had a sister. And he had some kind of uncle, so they sent us papers, and we came to United States. We came together, Me, Rae, my father, and her husband.

Where did you come-- sorry-- where did you come when you came to America?

When we come to Brooklyn.

Did the Joint Distribution Committee help you? Or HIAS?

I think the HIAS.

How long did you live in Brooklyn?

Till we moved to Elizabeth.

And your father, what did he do?

In the beginning, he was working for hats. He used to make hats. And then, he retired. He retired pretty early. Thank god we could afford to help him and everything.

You met your husband here?

In United States. In Brooklyn. From a blind date.

A blind date? Very nice.

Thank God I have two daughters and three grandchildren.

So did you talk to your daughters about your experiences?

My daughters know almost everything. And then I told her that you're going to tape it. She said, oh I want to give-- you want the date from when my mother was killed. And when my sister.

My sister said, get over with it, because she was expecting that I would be very nervous when I talk about this.

You're doing fine.

How was my lecture? Good?

My mother died the 7th of May, 1943. And my sister, the 8th of December, 1941. And then my brother, the 22nd September, 1943. When we went out from the tunnel.

What would you consider your worst experience the whole thing?

Everything was worst. The worse thing was when I lost my mother, and my sister, my brother. My brother, I'm afraid, that's what I think. That he wore glasses. And I think he lost the glasses and he couldn't see, so that's what I think.

We went back. They don't kill them right now. They make them suffer.

Have you ever gone back? Did you ever go back to your city?

Yeah, we went back after the war.

No, no, no. I mean--

Now?

Now.

Plenty of us went.

Yes?

Yeah. We made pictures-- Oh I wanted to bring it here but I forgot-- we made pictures from the graves. There were, I think the Russian.

The Jewish cemetery?

Jewish cemetery.

That wasn't-- it was still there?

They were ruined. Yeah. But ruined. But she went and a few went already. Before, we were afraid to go, but now they go. I think they have to get permission from Washington if you want to go there. Because they didn't let you come I think in this city. They let you come near. So when was near, she took a taxi. And she, don't worry, I'll pay you enough. Just take me. I want to see the cemetery.

Why would they not let you go to the city? Are there any Jews left in that city?

I don't know, I think maybe two. Two or three.

When you lost your mother and your sister and your brother, did you think that it would ever end? What was your feeling?

The feeling was already, you know, that it will never end. It will end because they don't have no more to kill already. But we were planning so much not to let them kill us alive.

And then at least, the trucks used to come by. They used to holler. Remember. Remember us. Tell the second generation. The second generation, make it third generation. You should believe us.

If we ask you to give a message, the most important thing you would like to tell the people who will look at this tape, what would you say?

The best message that I can give is people have to live like human. Not like animals. You don't think, all right, you kill big people, I understand. But little children. 10 months old, 12 months old, they take them by the leg and they throw it on the grave with dead people. It's not normal. But they did.

Looking back, was there anything that you think now you might have done to perhaps prevent it.

We thought maybe we should have done it earlier what we did later.

To escape? To leave.

Yeah, from the ghetto. Yeah. But, you know when you are imprisonment and you see so many soldiers and they make electric fires and to protect yourself from them with everything. You can imagine how much work was to make the tunnel. To dig the tunnel. Some people didn't want to get out from the ghetto. They wanted to stay.

Because it was safe.

They said we will be safe.

Was there rumor that you were going to be transported from the ghetto somewhere else?

Yeah, we knew.

The camps.

The Tuesday, they going to kill us. It's going to be Judenrein. This? Is the last Jews. That's going to clean here and this will be finished.

Judenfrei.

Free of Jews. And that's why we decided to run away Sunday. To get out.

Did you ever get to say goodbye to your mother? Did you know that her time?

No.

When you were in the ghetto, did you hear about Dachau and Auschwitz?

Not about so much. Not so much, because-- but yes, they did different things in different way. But they knew that-- and when it was our almost liberation when we went out from the ghetto, so we heard that there is ghettos. And they kill them, they do with them terrible things. We heard this. And this. But we heard that the war is close to finish. That the war is close to an end.

But, you know, when you are busy, you work. They tell you to work, and if you don't work they hit you and everything. All the time, you think, oh you see them they will do it. But not us. Them, but not us.

But you see, the young people said no more. They wanted to cut the fence in four pieces. And they had guns and everything prepared and everything. And they wanted to do it. So they will die, but at least they'll die heroic.



So they wanted-- So they weren't like sheep.

No. So that's why then they saw it. Because if you make it in four corners and we are so little people here. They are going to put a lot of police with everything to protect us. So the only thing-- so that time they decided, the best thing the boys decided, the best thing is a tunnel.

It wasn't such a good thing-- you know, it was good-- You know to carry the scent. Just to get in the pocket. And then they add it from where we slept. They used to pour it out.

And the architect that made the plan, he died last year-- two years ago in Israel. He was a relation to us.

What did he do after?

He made the plan.

Was he an architect?

No. But they planned it and they put it up in our city. They made a copy of it.

No. I mean, what did he do? What was his business when he went to Israel?

He went to the Army. He came there. He was about 17, 18 years old. He didn't have nobody. He didn't have nothing. You know, his sister lives here in Elizabeth. She's going to be interviewed, too.

So he went to the Army. The best thing. He was secure. He had to sleep, eat. But he make a career out of this. He was in the Army til he died.

Oh really? Oh that's interesting.

And he met a girl and she didn't know nobody. Not even a relative. Nobody. So she saw him, a soldier, you know. He has nothing, I have nothing, we'll make together a living. And they had three boys and they are very good positions.

Did you have any other friends, girlfriends, that you had grown up with that survived?

That survived? I can't think of it.

Very often, people who are interviewed here talk about friends, like Nancy just mentioned. And somebody else seeing these tapes maybe hears about somebody she knew. And you mentioned the name. Sometimes we ask if you had special friends.

I had one girlfriend that from [PLACE NAME] Two of them. But one became very strictly Orthodox. She lives in Borough Park.

Borough Park, Brooklyn.

And one that I see, often not often, but we see each other. That we were in school together.

Did it ever end for you? This whole? Or is it still part of you?

Well, this will last I think forever. I can forget about it and do something and go something and everything, but it still comes to you.

That's why I'm telling you, my sister said, I wish you would be over it. She's so nervous. I was nervous to come. I said

maybe I won't be able to so good to tell you or something.

So it's still really part of your days?

This is going to be til the end of our life is going to be. We forget something. We are trying to make now, there is second generation we want to make. Like my daughters and there are some other people we know and they have children, too. And we would love to make an organization of second generation.

Survivors' children.

Yeah.

You already have third generation? Right?

Yeah. My sister has four generation.

Oh my.

Her granddaughter got married. And she has her four children. Everyone has four children.

What do you think about living in America? In New Jersey?

I love love it.

You like it?

I love it. Why should I-- is there anything I can say no? Thank God. My father lived with me the whole life. He never re-married.

Very lucky to have your father survive. And you've been to Israel?

Once. But that's where I want to go.

Me too.

What do you think about Germany? West Germany today?

I don't know.

Do you think they've changed? The Germans? The young Germans?

The young Germans changed? This is always going to remain in their blood.

You think so?

Am I right?

I think it's something that, as you said, we can't forget.

But how can people write books and say this never happened? There was never Hitler? first of all, they were very jealous all their lives of the Jews. Like I told you before about the super. He's very religious. And I tell him, said he's not so right. Some of the time.

So I said, listen, ask your priest. There was-- they killed Jewish people. And in the end, they took little children that

don't know nothing. They didn't sin yet. They didn't have time. They didn't grow up yet. And you kill me. Why? Who has a nature and who can do it?

He's Catholic? Your super?

Religion, I don't exactly know which one. But there's a religion. Yeah, so that's the whole story what he said to me. He came back, said I got the answer for you. And my husband doesn't like it when I talk to him about the religion, the religion, he get upset.

So, he said, you know Mr Reibel, to my husband, you know what? If all the Jews will go away to Israel how are we going to live? No banks, no buildings, no everything.

That's the old idea, that the Jews own everything.

So I told him, you know what? Listen. You know why they killed my mother and my father and everybody? Because they were jealous. And you are jealous, too.

What did he say?

I don't. He didn't.

Have you felt any anti-Semitism since you've been in America?

Well, you hear so much and you know A dog, you know, you hit him. He still remembers it. And there's some things, a lot of things, maybe, that we are afraid is happening.

Today?

Look now with the prayers in the school. This is something that's not good.

What about the Soviet Jews? What do you think will happen to them?

The Soviet Jews, they want to go to Israel. I don't blame them. They want to go to their home. They should be permitted to go. That's what I think.

Well, I think our time is just about up. Is there anything--

What time is it?

We have about two more minutes. Is there anything you would like to leave us with?

I wish all the children and the whole youth is going to grow up not go through anything and not be punished like we were punished. And we are punished, and we try to do everything to do that you shouldn't be punished, this [? people. ?]

Thank you very much.

Thank you very much.

This was a very wonderful interview.

Yeah? Was it good?

Really excellent.

Thank you very much. How much, is an hour, probably?

Yeah. Thank you very much.

You are welcome.

[STRING MUSIC]