

[0:00:00]

Robert Buckley: Well, I'd like to thank you, first of all, for doing this interview. Would you please tell us your full name?

Marsha Albert: Marsha Albert.

Robert Buckley: All right. And where and when were you born?

Marsha Albert: I born in Russia, Ukraine.

Robert Buckley: And what was the name of the town?

Marsha Albert: Near **Dnipropetrovsk**.

Robert Buckley: All right. And what was the date of your birth?

Marsha Albert: I born December 19, 1910.

Robert Buckley: What was your family name, and what was the name of your parents?

Marsha Albert: My family name was **Sipirin**.

Robert Buckley: And what was the name of your father and mother?

Marsha Albert: Family name was Sipirin, and my mother name **Liesel**. My father name **Ipim**.

Robert Buckley: And did you have brothers and sisters?

Marsha Albert: I have a brother.

Robert Buckley: And his name?

Marsha Albert: **Shoma Shimeon**.

Robert Buckley: And was he older or younger than you?

Marsha Albert: Younger. I was the oldest.

Robert Buckley: What type of a town was your town that you were born in? Would you describe it a little bit for us?

Marsha Albert: Is big city of 400,000 people, and there were _____ live in the city _____. Was very industrial city, too.

Robert Buckley: And what type of work did your father do?

Marsha Albert: He was a barber.

Robert Buckley: And your mother? Did she work outside the home or just take care of the family?

Marsha Albert: My mother never worked. She was in house more.

Robert Buckley: Now, we know now you're one of Jehovah's Witnesses. But what was your religious background at that time?

Marsha Albert: Jewish.

Robert Buckley: Were they very active in the Jewish religion?

Marsha Albert: No. My father didn't believe in the priest. He always – my mother was more religious than my father because they tell you one thing and do another thing. He only go on big holidays; used to go to synagogue.

Robert Buckley: And was there a large Jewish population where you were at?

Marsha Albert: Yeah.

Robert Buckley: Very large Jewish ... and what type of activities did you enjoy as you were growing up? What were some of the things that you were interested in as a young girl?

Marsha Albert: Sad story. My youth was very sad. My mother died when I was ten years old. Father married. Jewish, they allow you to marry cousin. So he married his cousin, and she was very cruel to me. I used to have long hair. She used to put around the hand to hit my head on the wall. It's hard for me to talk about.

Robert Buckley: Yes. I understand. But what were some of the things that you liked, though, when you were growing up? Did you like art or hiking or ...

Marsha Albert: I like the school. I was good in school. I want to be engineer. I was best in school.

Robert Buckley: Very good. Did you have outside activity?

Marsha Albert: Yeah.

Robert Buckley: Outside activities, hiking or ...

Marsha Albert: Oh, no. I didn't have much because I have to work in house, do all the work. I was like the maid in the house.

Robert Buckley: So you went to school?

Marsha Albert: I went to school. Then home I come. All the work was on me – washing. We wash by hand, you know, back there. And all the work was on me to get done.

Robert Buckley: Now, we know that Hitler came to power in the year 1933 in Germany. What did the Ukrainian people think at that time about what was going on in Germany? Do you recall that at all?

Marsha Albert: I tell you I never was in politics too much interested. The living in Russia never was too good. Under Communist regime was very hard living.

Robert Buckley: Did your father ever talk about what was going on in Germany?

Marsha Albert: He loved Germans. He always say because after war my brother was have to go to war. My father say: "Don't go and fight with Germans. Go war prisoner to German," because my father didn't like Communists.

[0:05:00]

Robert Buckley: Now, when Hitler came to power in '33, of course, he started growing in power and in strength. And in 1939 he attacked Poland. Now, do you remember that event?

Marsha Albert: Yeah, I remember. Everybody was worried all of the sudden because Russia was not prepared for war.

Robert Buckley: So people were concerned that the Germans might attack?

Marsha Albert: Yeah, very much so. And my father live on Black Sea. When I – my first husband was sent to Siberia, and I was with two children and alone.

Robert Buckley: Oh, so by this time now by 1939 ...

Marsha Albert: I had already my children.

Robert Buckley: ... you were married. And what was the name of your husband?

Marsha Albert: Leonid his name and **Patriesov** – Russian.

Robert Buckley: So you had two children. And did he go to war?

Marsha Albert: No. Because his brother was officer in army when he was little boy, in Tsar army. When come Communism, his brother run away to France, Paris, when he used to write letter to his mother. And because of this letter, my husband was they say like spy for Paris, France. He never was involved in these things.

So one day, he had – they had asked him and put him in jail. This was in 1939. I think this was when they all intelligence in Russian. He was accounted of 400,000 people; had to count them. So they all doctors and professors all arrested to send to build up Siberia. The wives they used to arrest, too. I was ready, ready, suitcase packed.

My father stay with me. He thought he take my children when they come for me. They used to come night, three o'clock night, knock on the window. You say, "Who is there?" They asked you for a name just to scare you. So when they sent him to Siberia, they tell me first 25 years Siberia or no letters to write. And I never knew nothing. The letter somebody tell me go to secret police Russian to find more out.

They call us and they say he died. He told me: "You're so young. You can marry. Why you need to wait for him?"

I said, "That's my husband."

He said, "You know, he died," because they have their norm to work, so many trees to cut. They were starving. They eat rats, cats. I can't ...

Robert Buckley: Yeah, just terrible.

Marsha Albert: So I was with two children and nobody want to take me to work because they say he spy. When I was a counter too then and I have to go to work someplace very far and two children. We didn't have no heat in the house. It was very, very hard – hard for me.

Robert Buckley: Was there extra pressure on you also because of the fact that you had a Jewish background?

Marsha Albert: No. This was not his case about. This was during because of my husband being –

Robert Buckley: Now, was your husband – did he have a Jewish background?

Marsha Albert: No. He was Russian.

Robert Buckley: Russian, I see. So they thought he was a spy because of his brother.

Marsha Albert: Yeah, and he never did anything wrong. He worked at two jobs, sometimes whole night to make living. And when I buy a piece of butter, right [away] store report to secret police because we covered our basket when we [brought] it back that nobody see what you bought. But the people that working in store, they report to get _____. They say, “Where you got money?”

Robert Buckley: So they would even report you because you had a little extra money.

Marsha Albert: Yeah.

Robert Buckley: Now, when Hitler invaded Russia, then what began to happen?

Marsha Albert: I left. Then I live in Dnipropetrovsk, like I say, with my two children.

[0:10:00] Everybody was running away because they were coming closer. So I went with my two children. I went to my father to Black Sea where he lived. And on the way, German already bombarding the trains. We have to hide and get out. My children were so scared. One boy was ten years and other was five.

And when I come there to my father, so all of the sudden leaflets come from airplane. Jews go away because Germans killing all the Jews. My father say: “Don’t believe it. I don’t believe this. 1914 when German occupy Russia,” he say, “they were best people in the world. They love Jewish because the language little bit similar.” So my father said: “We don’t leave this city. We stay here and wait for our deliverer.”

And then they all of the sudden priest say to the Jewish people, too, they start to spread leaflets. “Go baptize. Become Catholic. Bring gold. Bring diamond,” because they knew Jewish people have money and gold. When you get baptized, then nobody will kill you. My father very sincerely went to be baptized. And his wife, but she hate Catholic or Jew. Only she was very Jewish. And

they pay my gold and diamond and my stepsister. They went. They were baptized. I was in paper Russian lady through my husband.

Robert Buckley: You mean they had to pay to get baptized?

Marsha Albert: Yeah, gold or diamond to priest. When they stay in line, there was hundreds of people to be baptized because when Hitler will come, they have Russian paper. But what happened after they pay? Then they give all the men to Hitler, to German army, of Jewish people.

Robert Buckley: So all the people that got baptized, Jewish people that got baptized.

Marsha Albert: Catholic priest give all the men to the Germans. Because I Russian, they didn't touch me. But what happened then? Bomb fell in my house. We didn't have water. Everything with water pipe was because of bomb. So we have to go maybe two, three blocks with pails to bring water. We hiding. We didn't know. We were not prepared for war. We were hiding in basement. This was worst place. And my children, I was worried when we come up. We didn't have nothing to eat. They were hungry. My boys could not sleep.

Breaking piece of bread. I could not give it to him. Very hard was, but they believe in God very much. He become close to Catholic church to look for something. So he become altar boy. And they tell them not to eat morning when they come, nothing to church. You have to come empty stomach. Well, he didn't have nothing to eat. He fainted. And the little one too they loved. Every night used to say, one thing he'll say Our Father, pray the Lord's Prayer.

And my neighbor tell me, "I have water, really a lot." She'll say: "Come on, Marsha. Come on. Get more. You need it. You have two children to take care."

I say, "No, I cannot leave children." Always four o'clock airplane maybe for half an hour, hour didn't come to bomb. Every day we notice this. So she force me to take the pail and go for water. My father was already dead this time. I lost him already because they took them all in prison.

[0:15:00] My father and his wife, my brother's two children and his wife and they were arresting people all together.

Robert Buckley: Where did they take them? Do you remember?

Marsha Albert:

They took them to prison first. They say Jewish people **come also. Hitler**, Germans say: "Take your valuable things and come in stay in prison. We'll transfer you to Israel." So they all went there. And I have to bring them to eat; little bit what leftover I bring to prison.

One day I come was all right. I visit them. Second time I come, my father say, "Something wrong." Because he barber, but he was not barber like alone. He work 24 people. He had beauty – beauty salon too for women. So he had little **ball** to hold his instrument. He said they took away from him. And all of the sudden such commotion started there in the prison. And my father say: "Run, Marsha, run! Something wrong." And he give me his hat, very expensive wool hat. He said: "Maybe you sell for children. Buy bread."

When he said run, I just run to the gates. They just close. I just could run out. My children was home alone. Still they were alive. When I come out, I come home and all of the sudden **war** start with the water. We didn't have water, so I went for water; she forced me. When a little boy run out from basement. They were in basement hiding. He said, "Mommy, Mommy, take me with you."

I say, "No, no, stay there," because I was afraid when bombs come, the airplanes. So I went for water, and he went back in basement. And when I just come to this place, there was line for water. All of the sudden the airplane come, German. Never come this time. And I drop my pail and I run because children there. All of the sudden explosion, huge explosion stones, huge stones that cover my head and everything cover what we wore.

When I run back there, man pulled me in house on the streets where we're running. He say: "You crazy! Where are you running?"

I say, "My children – they're alone!"

He say, "Then you'll be dead and your children don't have a mother." He pulled me in. But when start quiet, I come out. This was on my house bomb fell. They were all dead. Twenty-five people died in this house, and I was like unconscious, like crazy. They took me away. I didn't know what to do. To strangers they brought me there with another people, and I got fainted and maybe my heart stopped beating.

They were Turkish people, Armenian. They gave me Turkish coffee. They revived me. When I was screaming, when the woman

saw me screaming, she was crying too. They tell me, "You cannot cry. They took you in. You have to be quiet." How you can be quiet when you have breaking heart?

Then you could not go out because this was during the war. Like after four o'clock, nobody could go out. You have to be a soldier or know the password. All of the sudden young boy – I was sorry he didn't have father, mother. I always was nice to him. He come running and say, "Aunt," he say, "Marsha, your big boy is still alive. They took him out."

I couldn't believe it. I say, "Will God leave me one?" I say, "I don't cry." It was winter. Snow, so much snow. This was in January. I say early in the morning I'll run and take him and I went there. When I come close to the house, I saw him laying in the snow dead far away.

[0:20:00]

And people were saying: "But where is God? How could they do to you so much?" Most people I don't know. I didn't know about God much but I say, 'Maybe I'd done something wrong.' Thank God, I never blamed God for all my problems.

And then after this, I want to commit suicide. I didn't wash myself. I didn't eat, and I don't swim only in Black Sea when you go to lighthouse, the deep water. So I run there, winter scarf and coat. The people send me for water. When I run there, I want to jump. And when I was running, some Russian – I didn't know he Russian. German Russian. He saw me running. He run after me. He thought something wrong with this woman.

When he run after me, I want to jump. He got me from my scarf. When I scratch him all over, I was like wild animal. Only he start to talk to me Russian. I was shocked because his German uniform. I hate the Germans. I learned later not to hate anybody. *[Laughs]* But I tell him what happened to me. He said, "Look, I would cry with you too but doesn't help."

When he took me away, when he brought me home, asked where I lived. We didn't have too much to eat. He brought us flour and oil, many things to eat, these people where I lived too. And then he was staying with his army. He's supposed to come to stay in the building where I live.

But meanwhile, Russia left so much ammunition in this house. We have to clean up because German officers were coming to stay.

When I took one grenade, I told everybody I do it. Let me cry out, do work. Maybe this help me. They were watching me already. When I took one grenade, I hide it. Everything else I clean out. When I finish, I went to meet to the street. I didn't know you have to take the something out. When I drop this, a man saw me from window. He run out. He say, "You could explode whole block with this thing!" Somehow I don't know I still was alive.

Then all of the sudden come my father know Russian policeman. He become German policeman. He say they're looking for me, and they need prostitutes for the German officer. When he know my father, know me, he say, "Hide her" to these people.

So they could not bury the dead in this house because was frost. So they put him because **bomb** fell. Only basement you scarcely could go. House was destroyed. So what they did, all the people dead there were, and they blindfolded me and put me in this basement with all the dead people. I don't even remember. I was there three days, and I don't remember. I was not myself.

Robert Buckley: So you weren't able to see all the dead people around you.

Marsha Albert: And after this, this German soldier got interest in me. He tried to help me and everything. He helped me and he married me. I didn't want it. He so nice was really. And we married. Then they were taking people to work. You have to go to Germany to work. They force people to go to Germany, young people. So I have to go to Germany, but he arranged that I don't be in back like for cows train, where the officer sitting so I have better train to sit, to sleep. So he says –

Robert Buckley: You didn't go on one of those cattle cars.

Marsha Albert: Yeah. After the war, he want to come to Germany.

[0:25:00] So when we come to Germany, this was terrible. The German took us all girls that were Russian, but they say we take shower. This was **on Saturday**. They undress –

Robert Buckley: Where was this at now?

Marsha Albert: In Germany.

Robert Buckley: Yeah but where, though? Do you remember where, the town?

Marsha Albert: In Nuremburg.

Robert Buckley: Near Nuremburg.

Marsha Albert: Yeah.

Robert Buckley: And what was the year that happened?

Marsha Albert: The year 1942.

Robert Buckley: Forty-two, OK.

Marsha Albert: And they undress us all and all men working, all men in factory. Let us go naked through factory. I tell you. And then when after this, they send me to – everybody sent different places because many there was of us. When I come in Kirchenlamitz Stadt, Germany, Bavaria. That's what I come. The ports around factory I work. They put us in basement with iron bars and very little to eat, quarter pound bread a day and beets in water. Work in factory.

Robert Buckley: What time did you start in the morning? What was your day like? What time did you start? What time did you go to bed?

Marsha Albert: Oh, we used to start to work at **eight** o'clock to four. Then we have lunch, the beets in water they give us twelve o'clock. When I used to keep this little piece of bread because I couldn't sleep when I go to bed.

And then, of course, because of my husband, they found out he German, he soldier, I got out from basement. And they got me little apartment to live, a room. And my condition got better. And he used to send me packages, my husband, you know. It was not so bad. Only he come. Twice I think he come, yeah, all of the sudden. This was before war over, not completely.

But concentration camp was already found by American this year. Many Jewish people was running with their clothes from concentration camp all over. And one Russian woman know my father. She say, "You are Jew," she tell me.

Robert Buckley: So up to this time, they didn't know you were Jewish background.

Marsha Albert: No, no. She say this was still concentration camp was not – there still were Jewish in concentration camp. She said, "Prove that you not Jew." So I wrote to my husband. And he say he make paper that I should come and take citizenship in Poland, Litzmannstadt, to go there and take paper and become German.

And they say I have to prove I'm Jew or I'm Russian. They have to take blood. And I was a fool. I thought I can prove it with blood, but this is not so. I found later out. So, of course, they say real Russian; they say when they took blood there. But that was last time I saw my husband. You see, he was Russian. He run away from Russia, from Communist to German, and he was interpreter.

So when the war was at the end of the war, Russia start to have success. And the officer that know my husband, he got to him in war prison and he shot him. Then they tell me that he dead. So then after this later on I meet – that's how I married in Germany, Kirchenlamitz, when working in porcelain factory.

Robert Buckley: So how were you able to work out your problem proving that you were not Jewish?

Marsha Albert: How I work out? By proving. They took blood from my ear there in Litzmannstadt. And I didn't sleep all night. But then they next when I went to Litzmannstadt, there's so many poor Jewish concentration camps.

[0:30:00] When I pass by, my heart was bleeding. I could not do nothing. They stay there—iron bars, children, old people, young people begging—terrible.

So it was hard on me, but what I could do? I could not do much about. But then this person that tell me "Jew" when people come out from concentration camp, she come running to me. When she said, "Marsha, now you can put me concentration camp." She say, "What I talk about you that you Jew," she tell me.

I said I don't know. I did, like I said, didn't know about God too much, but I always believe in God. I said, "Look, Toni." Her name is Toni. I say, "Look, Toni. I don't judge you. Let God judge you, what you've done."

Robert Buckley: She probably felt because she was in, you should be there.

Marsha Albert: Yeah so –

Robert Buckley: So the blood test came back, and they said you were not Jewish.

Marsha Albert: No. 'Real Russian,' they say. [Laughs] I don't know how I escape all this but ...

Robert Buckley: OK, so then you continued to do the work?

Marsha Albert: Yeah, I work there in Germany but then I met Hans.

Robert Buckley: So you continued to work in Germany. Now, you were working at the porcelain factory all during that time?

Marsha Albert: Yeah, yeah, because I work. I pack the dishes. I used to write. They saw my writing. They like it. I got nice job. But I was crying four years for my children.

And then one day, Russia woman tell me – I could not sleep. I used to say because my boy, when they take him out, he say, “Where is my mommy? I want to live. I so young.” Then he scream for me, and then he fell from chair. There was no doctors, no help. They put him on the chair and he died. So I used to see them in dream. “Mama, help! Mama, help!” I thought I go crazy.

So one Russian woman elderly too was there working. She tell me, “Let us go to the church to priest. They pray for the souls.” So I was foreigner working, and they pay you five mark German. It’s less than five dollar. They give you the soup water, but they give you five dollar a days or five mark.

And I take dollar have, take mark in my hand, and we went to this priest. We have to travel quite a while. And he start to pray for them, for children, but I could not understand Latin, Russian priest. And I hear the name of my children he mention, and he say: ‘Five dollar for soul, five mark for soul.’ And that’s only I have. I say: “I have so many people. I don’t know for whom to pray first. I know as mother, children come first.” And I pray for them, let him pray. And he give me little bread and holy water, take on empty stomach.

When I come home like psychiatrist. I start to sleep a while, maybe week. And then again I start to see them. When I went back, I didn’t have money. He said no, he cannot pray for them. He knew my situation.

When I come there, we didn’t have to eat. I have two potatoes I mashed with salt. In January, cold. I took in jar. And a priest American was ready there. They give them good food. All my friend had gold and diamond. They invite her to eat with them in school when I was sitting in cold and eating these cold potatoes. They didn’t drop you nothing to eat.

Robert Buckley: So this was after the war now?

Marsha Albert: Yeah.

Robert Buckley: OK.

Marsha Albert: But German already occupied, Germany.

Robert Buckley: I see. Let me just go back just a little bit. What was the name of the porcelain company that you worked for? Do you remember?

Marsha Albert: Winterling Porcelain Factory, Winterling name.

[0:35:00]

Robert Buckley: And what was it like when the – was it the American troops that freed your camp or the place where you worked? What was the army?

Marsha Albert: German they work in factory.

Robert Buckley: OK, yes. You worked there, but who was it who freed your camp? Was it the American army that came in?

Marsha Albert: No. They didn't free me. I was free then when they come. I was living in apartment. The other people they freed. I already come out from because my husband German.

Robert Buckley: So they permitted you to be released.

Marsha Albert: Yeah.

Robert Buckley: I see. Because your husband was German, working with the German army. OK, so they released you from there, and then that's why they paid you five marks a day. So –

Marsha Albert: Not a day—week.

Robert Buckley: The week?

Marsha Albert: Yeah.

Robert Buckley: OK. I wasn't sure on that. So you went to the Catholic priest, and he took your whole five dollars for each son.

Marsha Albert: Yeah, from each soul.

- Robert Buckley:* Right. So what did you think of that?
- Marsha Albert:* I was in such deep sorrow constantly. I don't know. I thought priest supposed to be God's spokesman. But he say maybe I wrong. I don't give it. I don't have it. I couldn't give a thing at this time. But then, priest didn't have it. We got it. Americans start to buy in factory porcelain. And our owner of the factory asked for food, what they could give. They don't want money. He said, "My worker need food." When they give us oil, margarine. Oh, we live up!
- Now the Russian woman come to me and say: "Priest don't have nothing to eat now. Maybe you help him." Then I got so furious. I said: "No! He don't get from me nothing. When he could not pray for my children. When I didn't have nothing, did he give it to me?" And this Russian woman, she give me Jesus picture, figurine, all these things. And this later maybe explain.
- Robert Buckley:* Now, when you were in your travels going to Germany and when you were first put into that porcelain factory and so on, forced labor, did you come across other prisoners other than Jewish people, other than the Russians? Did you come across any Gypsies or Jehovah's Witnesses, *Bibelforscher*?
- Marsha Albert:* No. They in Germany were only the Germans. Russian worked there. French people I come in contact, war prisoners.
- Robert Buckley:* Did you hear at all what was happening in the concentration camps?
- Marsha Albert:* Yeah. You know, when I was living with the woman that give me room. Because when I went to my father after in prison when I find out they killed him, man that watch in war prison, in prison, was so tough. He saw many dead people. But he was telling everybody: 'They poison all children. They give them poison chocolate. And they took all the clothes.' Poor Russian didn't have much. Naked kids and put them like garbage truck. And he got crazy this man. He was telling everybody and angry and telling what they'd done to the people. When I stayed with the woman in Germany rooming, I saw her husband from concentration camp. She called me, "Marsha, come on! What I have—children's clothes from Russia." From Russia he sent the wife from concentration camp clothes. I could not say nothing. My heart was broken. I couldn't. What they prove, what they did.

Robert Buckley: How did the other women seem to fare? Or how did they put up with all of this, the other women that you worked with?

Marsha Albert: Russian?

Robert Buckley: Yeah.

[0:40:00]

Marsha Albert: Russian, you know, young girls. They were fooling around. They don't care. They look on Frenchmen. They were not too sad about. After the war, they went back home.

Robert Buckley: And did the German soldiers take advantage of the Russian girls?

Marsha Albert: In Russia, yes. But there where I was, no because there was factory. They didn't do it. But my brother was still alive. And he saw from window. He was already officer in army, and he looked through window. One officer walk with a soldier German. Nice girl was walking, and right there in the street they rape her. My brother want to run out. My father was holding him.

Robert Buckley: Acted like animals. So now the war ended, so what did you begin to do now to put your life back together?

Marsha Albert: So I work ...

Robert Buckley: Well, first of all, let me go back. What – how did you feel the day that you knew the war ended? How did you personally feel?

Marsha Albert: Oh, I feel the struggle might be gone. But for me, that's never finished. For me, war didn't finish my trouble because I lost everybody. Of course, I sorry for all people. But I was in great sorrow. Some people might have lost one person, two. I lost all my family. Having 13 people, then stay all alone in strange country.

Robert Buckley: So the war was over, but it was not over.

Marsha Albert: I was always sad. People thought I never can smile, even in factory.

Robert Buckley: So now you began to put your life back together little by little.

Marsha Albert: Little by little.

Robert Buckley: Did you – sure, let's just stop for a minute. Fine, no problem.

Now, you were beginning to put your life back together now after the war. What were some of the first things that you began to do in order to try to piece your life together?

Marsha Albert: So I tried to stay in Germany. They forced people to go back to Germany – to Russia, those that come to Germany. But because I German citizen, so I stay in Germany because nothing was for me in Russian anymore. So to be there working; lived life like everyone. I was not interest[ed] in nothing else, just working. A lot music I used to listen and cry, music—music, good music. But that's how I lived there in Germany.

Robert Buckley: Did you still work at that porcelain factory?

Marsha Albert: Yeah.

Robert Buckley: And were you promoted or anything?

Marsha Albert: No, no. They not promotion.

Robert Buckley: Just as a worker and then –

Marsha Albert: They liked me. All German liked me very much.

Robert Buckley: Well, you were a very attractive person. Perhaps maybe you could show us the pictures here, OK? Hold it up a little higher, higher. That's it. A little higher. So that was your picture in what year? In what year was that picture taken? Do you remember?

Marsha Albert: Nineteen years, maybe '39 or '29?

Robert Buckley: OK, and here's another picture. Maybe you can hold that one up also, please. Hold it up a little higher. Whoops, down just a little bit.

Marsha Albert: Oh, down.

Robert Buckley: Thank you. And when was that picture taken?

Marsha Albert: I think this was taken '29. Now I remember.

Robert Buckley: OK, and then when was this picture taken?

Marsha Albert: I was 38 years old then.

Robert Buckley: OK. Hold that. That was when you were – is that 1939 or ...

Marsha Albert: No. I was 38 years old—'48.

Robert Buckley: Oh, right after the war.

Marsha Albert: Yeah.

Robert Buckley: So that was a picture after the war, and that was taken probably then in Germany, in Germany someplace.

Marsha Albert: That's right.

Robert Buckley: OK, very good. And then you must have met your present husband then, right?

Marsha Albert: Yeah.

Robert Buckley: And how did you meet him?

[0:45:00]

Marsha Albert: I was – he worked – he's china decorator or artist on china painting. I worked on ground floor packing. He work on second floor. And they always used to give us 12 o'clock little soup and piece of bread for all workers. So I have to pass by where Hans work, and I have wooden shoes. I didn't have shoes. When he always hear when I used to come. Only I have wooden shoes, and he noticed me, but I didn't notice nobody.

And all of the sudden after awhile, young girl working with him was my friend. She say, "Mrs. Hein." My name was Mrs. Hein. She say, "Hans send you regards."

I say, "Who is Hans?"

She say, "A worker, that porcelain *maler*" in German they say.

I say, "Please tell him I don't make nobody happy because I'm very unhappy person, to leave me alone."

No. After a while, again she come. I say, "I don't know." I say, "Please tell him get [away]." And one day I packing. She running. She say – I say, "Who is he?" There he walking. [*Pointing into distance*] I saw from window—not bad looking. [*Laughs*]. He was

dressed _____ *[speaking German]* like German, very nice, young. But I still didn't have interest in men.

And then one day I was going to work. We eat 12; then we go to work. This was small town—3,000 people. So when I'm going to work, this girl come to me running. All of the sudden behind me Hans was. And he say, "Gertrude, you're working with my star," and she introduced. He say, "Introduce me to her." I could not run away. I was already 38 years old.

So she introduced me to him and I thought, that's the end. We come to the factory, and he talked to me when I want to go to work. Already siren going and he say, "I want to see you today." I say, "No." But he say, "Please."

I say, "Look, I am foreign worker here. I lose job." He hold me and don't let me go. Everybody looking from window. They notice it. I could not say then no. I say all right. He knew where I lived. And that's how I met him. Three times we went together. He proposed to me.

Robert Buckley: He was a fast worker.

Marsha Albert: Yeah. Because everybody tell me, "Oy, we sorry for you, Marsha," because he was 34 years old and not married because he was in army, and he say he know what he want.

Robert Buckley: What did you think when you found out he was in the Germany army before?

Marsha Albert: And I, you know, I know he was in German army. A Russian woman tell me, "Don't tell him you're Jewish" because in Russia few girls, beautiful girls married German officer. Whey find out that they are Jews, they killed them in bed. She tell me, "He kill you." I said I cannot marry the man not telling him. I always was in this honest. I cannot. I have to tell him. Then we see what will happen because I like him, too, already.

So then my age was not right in my paper. Then another story—they didn't want to give me paper. They make me seven years younger. Then I could get paper. So I was older than him. On paper I was younger than him.

I tell him. I say: "I have to tell you. I come and tell you two thing" when he proposed to me. "First, I'm older than on paper—three and a half years than you."

He say, "That's no big deal."

I say, then I say, "I'm Jew." And I tell him what happened to my family.

He say, "I'm so ashamed that I'm a German. How they could do this to people!"

[0:50:00]

He said, "That doesn't stop me to love you." And he know at nights when we already married, I used to wake up and scream because always like somebody was behind me. He was so scared. He used to keep me down. And because he's nice man and he also was God-fearing man. So I married and was very happy with him. I find somebody that cover my – my heart was much easier with him to live on.

Robert Buckley:

Well, then how did you feel about the German people afterwards then, after you were working in Germany for – after a while?

Marsha Albert:

First, I was very bitter. But then I see they're good people too that don't know what's going on really there. And some people, not everybody was against people. And I like many people; I like it.

Robert Buckley:

Now, did you – let's see then. Is this a picture of Hans?

Marsha Albert:

Yeah.

Robert Buckley:

OK. You want to show us a picture there? Let me get a little bit close up of that one, OK. And when was that picture taken approximately?

Marsha Albert:

1948. That's when we married.

Robert Buckley:

Is that when you were married right here? OK, down a little bit, please. OK, very handsome couple—beautiful couple.

Marsha Albert:

Thank you.

Robert Buckley:

OK, very good. So now you're married and did you have any children?

Marsha Albert:

No, we did not have children.

Robert Buckley:

Didn't have children. Now let me ask you, now we know you changed your religious beliefs. When did you become interested in

the Bible and become interested in the Bibelforscher or Jehovah's Witnesses? And what made you get interested?

Marsha Albert: I was mostly the Catholic belief. And my husband Hans was looking for true religion. He was not satisfied with his.

Robert Buckley: What was his religious background?

Marsha Albert: He's Lutheran, and he went even to my Catholic church. He said, "Let us be engaged in Catholic church." We went there. He didn't like it either. He was looking for true religion. And I think he will tell you more, more about this how he find it.

Robert Buckley: OK.

Marsha Albert: But I start, you see, when Hans start to be interested. He took – ask for a book. They have *Children* book. He read through whole night. I woke up three o'clock, two o'clock. He was reading. He said, "That's the true religion."

Robert Buckley: When did he get that book called *Children*?

Marsha Albert: Yeah.

Robert Buckley: And who produced that book?

Marsha Albert: Jehovah's Witnesses.

Robert Buckley: And what was the year that he came across that book?

Marsha Albert: I don't know really.

Robert Buckley: So your husband was contacted first then, and he started reading.

Marsha Albert: Yeah. One morning he said: "That's true religion. That's the truth." Then he start to go to meeting[s].

Robert Buckley: Now, what was the town you were in at that time? What was the city you were in at that time?

Marsha Albert: Here in Kirchenlamitz Sadt still in Germany. And right away, he used to come from meeting 12 o'clock night and say what is for religion. Then I saw him going first Sunday. He told brother, "Let us go and tell another people about," young brother. He was maybe 19 or 20.

Robert Buckley: You mean now he started to share what he learned with other people?

Marsha Albert: He invite them to go from door to door and tell people about. He'll tell you more about this.

Robert Buckley: OK. Well, what did you think of this?

Marsha Albert: Because there was young girls. Usually on Sunday we used to go dress up, eat breakfast, and then go out in forest dressed up. When all of the sudden, I see he dressing fast, eating, and when I looked through window, there was young girls. Where he going with them? I said, "What is this for religion there?" And then he come 12 at night.

Meanwhile, I find – Hans helped me to find my family here in America, my father's brothers and sister.

[0:55:00] So what I did then I start to correspond with them, and they want to take us to America. When I tell him – he's German and they're Jewish. When I tell her he really saved my life. Without him I don't know I would live long. They accepted him, and they were making papers. So I tell Hans: "What's going on? You don't love me."

He said: "You know I love you very much. But I love Jehovah more."

I said, "Who is Jehovah?"

Robert Buckley: Oh, so he didn't tell you all these things he was learning at this point?

Marsha Albert: No. I said, "Who is Jehovah?" I start to be jealous on Jehovah, and I didn't know who is he. Then we could not get *Watchtower* because everything was confiscated. You get one *Watchtower* and whole group we have to read in advance. You keep every day or evening you give to another. So it happened to be in my house the *Watchtower*. Hans had to read. I come home and I see *Watchtower*. "Jehovah," say in German. I say, "Who is Jehovah?"

And then he told me because I was so sincere in Catholic. I make crosses when I eat. He tell me, "Look in the Bible, Ten Commandments."

I say, "Where is Ten Commandments?" He opened and he left. When I look Exodus 20:4, it said not to make any images and I

have Jesus images here. When I cried looking on Jesus' crown and blood every morning, I was so confused. I fell on the knee before window. I said: "Please, who you are God? Please tell me! I don't know you true God or I am wrong?" I was so confused.

Hans three months only with them, with Jehovah's Witnesses. Winter, snow, cold. He come home. He said: "Give me my bathing suit. I'm going to be baptized." No, he didn't say baptized. Say, "I need bathing suit."

I said: "Where are you going to bathe in January? There are no swimming pools."

He said, "I be baptized."

I said, "Where?"

He said, "We're going to another city." I forgot the city. "I be baptized there. We're going by train."

"No," I said. "Now I go too." I don't let him go with these girls by train. I tell him take me my ticket too, so we went there. He was baptized. I didn't know Genesis. I never saw the Bible in my life. I knew the Bible holy book. But in Russia when they find the Bible, they put you in prison. Siberia they send you. So but I have great respect for the Bible.

So I start to go to meeting. Little leaflets—I start to talk to Hans' mother, and father listen too. His father knew Bible beautiful, but he didn't know really the meaning behind the Bible. I start to talk to her. And then in six months I was baptized in Munich. When I didn't know nothing about the Bible, but they show me that there be resurrection here on the earth because priest tell me ...

Robert Buckley: You mean the people –

Marsha Albert: ... that my children suffer in hell, in purgatory because of my sin. And they tell there is no such thing, and they use John 5:28, 29. That's my favorite scripture. And I say I want to become Witness, and I was baptized six months later than Hans. And I love it because everything was from the Bible, everything that say. What a comfort to live on and to see your loved ones back and to tell them the truth.

Robert Buckley: You mean the people that have died are going to come back?

Marsha Albert: Yeah, because the Bible says so; that God is impossible to lie. He promised. When we don't believe in resurrection, we don't believe in Christ.

Robert Buckley: I see. So then you became one of Jehovah's Witnesses then, as your husband.

Marsha Albert: Yeah, become Witness, yeah, and then –

Robert Buckley: So and then that was in Germany.

[1:00:00]

Marsha Albert: In Germany. And we still were not married with Hans. That was problem because I didn't have paper that my husband dead. So they have thought that it was take two years. Then only we could marry. So what happens? I'm already Witness. Brother coming circuit servant. Back then, I don't know who's circuit servant. But nobody can take him to stay in the house with them. And I didn't know who he is, but I say to brother, "Come and teach us more." And he agreed; very good with the Bible. I said, "Poor man." He come and nobody take him. I have one room. I said, "I take him." So I offered him.

Robert Buckley: Now, what was he? Did he travel to different congregations, this man?

Marsha Albert: But he come to us, to our congregation. The circuit servant, yeah.

Robert Buckley: So he stayed at your –

Marsha Albert: Yeah. He was seven years in concentration camp. He's brother anointed, Brother **Beyer**.

Robert Buckley: Ah, so did he tell you his experiences of what happened there in the camps?

Marsha Albert: Yeah, he told me that his mother – he Jewish.

Robert Buckley: He was Jewish?

Marsha Albert: His mother used to be in concentration camp. Blood sausage. Of course, he didn't eat the sausage.

Robert Buckley: So he was Jewish in the concentration camp, but he was one of Jehovah's Witnesses?

Marsha Albert: Yeah, he Jehovah's Witness, yeah. Seven years was in concentration camp. When he come, we ration in Germany. Quarter pound meat a week. Me and Hans have apound of meat. Now I say the circuit servant coming this brother. We didn't eat meat for months and I saved for him.

Robert Buckley: You wanted to make a special –

Marsha Albert: I make a cake, make everything nice for him. I have still images standing there. I didn't worship them because the Russian woman say, 'When you threw them out, God kill you.' I still didn't have knowledge.

Robert Buckley: Superstition, OK.

Marsha Albert: Yeah, superstition. So when he come in, you know there's a cord in back. He will sleep where there is image. There's images. I said, "Look, I don't worship them anymore." But I tell him I afraid because she threaten me. She say that God will kill me. So I tell him too. He start comfortable like, even to eat. And I tell him that we don't married, Hans and I, because I don't have paper from my husband.

So he told me, "You know, Marsha, you very good person I see." He say: "The angels look in the window. They want to bless your house. But they see pictures don't let them in to bring blessing." He say, "You don't have to threw them out when you worried." Because I already have suitcases, new, staying there to go to America. So he said: "Put in suitcase. And then study more the Bible, and you find out what to do with them."

So I'm preparing the food. He start to eat, and look, he start to cry and the food. I was upset. I say, "What's wrong?"

He said: "No, my stomach cannot take no more this good food. Not because I cry I cannot eat. I cry on how you took away from you. And I cannot eat heavy food, nothing like this."

Robert Buckley: So he didn't feel right eating your food?

Marsha Albert: He could not eat. Only little cake he had. When he went to sister's, he was Jehovah's Witnesses. He went there. He went there and say he cannot sleep good maybe. He tell me don't throw out images. I put in suitcase fast and locked it. After he left, again start to get cold, winter. I say: 'We don't get paper. We don't get paper. I say

let me just throw these images.' I try it. I put winter coat, dress. Oven, coal oven, I threw all in and I run three, four block from my house to the church, close to the church there.

When I look at the house exploding, waiting the house will explode—nothing. I start to get cold. So when I come quietly in house, everything is gone, burned. And in two months I got my paper, not two years.

[1:05:00]

When we married, brother, we had to go in city hall to marry. And then brother pioneer married us in house. Gave us Bible talk about marriage.

Robert Buckley: You said a “pioneer.” What is that? Is that a full-time teacher?

Marsha Albert: Oh, I’m sorry. I didn’t realize it. Yeah, that’s full-time minister. They give all their time voluntarily, without pay, teaching people Bible.

Robert Buckley: I see. So then when did you and Hans come to America? What was the year?

Marsha Albert: Fifty ...

Hans Albert: One.

Robert Buckley: 1951. And then so now you have your home here, your beautiful home.

Marsha Albert: Yeah, and we still close together. He now blind but, thank God, he was elder for many years. And we come to America. When we come, we decide that one of us should be full-time minister. And my husband and I decide I should. I could not make support us both, so I start this in '56. 1956 I become full-time minister, and I am very happy. I help many people to see the better way of living—really true living, not just a dream but reality.

Robert Buckley: And what about the old things that went on in your past life? Does that still –

Marsha Albert: I don’t see my children no more in dream. I didn’t need priest anymore.

Robert Buckley: You mean because –

Marsha Albert: Because the Bible hope that my children don't suffer. That's what persecution was mine. They're just sleeping for a while. Jesus called death, his friend Lazarus, he asleep when he was dead because they compare sleep to resurrection. When somebody asleep, you can wake them up.

Robert Buckley: Oh, so your children are just asleep then? I see.

Marsha Albert: And I wait for them with Jehovah's mercy to see them back.

Robert Buckley: OK. That's wonderful. Well, look, you have some pictures from your portfolio. We want to take some of the pictures out. I'm going to shoot some of your pictures, OK? You can show me. We'll put them right in your lap there. You want to start at the bottom?

Marsha Albert: This is my big boy. That's my small and that's me.

Robert Buckley: In the middle, OK.

Marsha Albert: That's my father. That's my mother. That's me. And that's me. I was eight years old.

Robert Buckley: OK. Would you want to – the next page? You want to go back the other way?

Marsha Albert: That's my father.

Robert Buckley: OK. Now, he was in the Russian army?

Marsha Albert: Yeah.

Robert Buckley: Back in World War I?

Marsha Albert: Yeah, 1914.

Robert Buckley: OK.

Marsha Albert: This is my whole family here that killed.

Robert Buckley: And they died in a camp when they were sent away?

Marsha Albert: No, they killed.

Robert Buckley: They shot them or whatever.

Marsha Albert: Yeah.

Robert Buckley: And who's that right there?

Marsha Albert: That's Hans when he was in German army.

Robert Buckley: And who's the lady on the right?

Marsha Albert: That's me.

Robert Buckley: OK.

Marsha Albert: So many pictures. That's it.

Robert Buckley: OK. Well, Mrs. Albert, we want to thank you very much for taking the time to share with us your life experience of what happened to you. And this is an expression of appreciation that we can use this film in the Oral History Department of the Holocaust Memorial Museum. Thank you.

Marsha Albert: Thank you too.

[End of Audio]