

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Frima  
May 7, 1990  
RG-50.030\*0123**

## **PREFACE**

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Frima, conducted by Linda Kuzmack on May 7, 1990 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview cannot be used for sale in the Museum Shop. The interview cannot be used by a third party for creation of a work for commercial sale.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

**FRIMA**  
**May 7, 1990**

01:00:12

Q: Could you please tell me your name?

A: Frima.

Q: When were you born?

A: In '36 – 1936.

Q: Where were you born?

A: Volochisk.

Q: Which is where?

A: Which is part of Russia.

Q: Could you tell me something about your parents?

A: Well, my parents – of course, to me they were the best parents in the world. My mother was a housewife. My father made a living for her. And we were a happy family with two other children. There was three of us, a brother, we were two sisters. And we had a beautiful family. We had a large family, uncles and aunts, grandparents, niece and nephews, nieces, cousins. Unfortunately, all of them were killed by the Germans, by the Nazis actually. And there's very little, very few of us left at the present time. And what is there to talk about? We had a wonderful home. We had a beautiful home. We had a beautiful life until World War II came around and this is when our problems started and our life was destroyed. But we survived, minus my father, my aunts, my uncles, my cousins, my grandparents. It's just the four of us who survived. And where do we start talking about our lives?

01:02:21

Q: Tell me what happened when the Nazis came in?

A: When they came in we tried to escape. We thought perhaps we would go to White Russia which supposedly, you could be safe there, but it was too late. After two days of traveling, we had to turn back and we came back to our town. At that time the Nazis had already fencing in about 20 blocks or so – and all the Jewish people had to move out of their homes and go to live in that area. And had some distant cousins living there, so we moved in with them and we lived with them. My father since he spoke many languages, he was taken by the

Nazis as an interpreter. And so he would work during the day and come home at night to the ghetto. The rest of us – I would – I stayed home. My mother and my sister were taken to work to labor camps every day and brought back in the evening. While living there, of course, life was very harsh, very hard. We could not go out of the ghetto. You were supposed to stay inside. The minute we moved into the ghetto we had – they put up the yellow stars on each one of us. We always had to walk around in the streets with a yellow star, one in the back and one up front. Frightening it was, but that was part of our lives and we existed like this for a few months until one morning very early we heard knocking on the doors and the windows and yelling, you know, "Get out! Get out! Get out!" So quickly we got dressed and we walked out of the house that we were staying in. The Gestapo was there and they told us all to go in a certain direction. My mother put on me my beautiful rabbit coat that I had, a rabbit coat and a hat. And we started following the other people, and they took us to a large building. It must have been a factory and they told us to get undressed. And they would make you take off the jewelry and everything, any valuables that you had on you. They undressed – they told us to get undressed. We all did. The women remained with the underwear only, and the men in their shorts. And my mother wasn't fast enough to take off her gold earrings, so she was hit by a Gestapo with the handle of a rifle and she fell down. We picked her up.

01:05:52

And all of us – there were a few hundred of us – we were all already undressed, and we had to form lines outside. It was a cloudy day, very cloudy, and a very fine drizzle was going down. And all the women were so embarrassed that they were without anything on top that they all covered their breasts with their hands. And they made groups and we started walking the street following the other people. As we were passing some of those streets and there were some Ukrainians who were cheering as we were walking by. They were applauding and cheering. But this, this what was done to us. We kept on walking silently without saying anything until we were out of the city. And on the roads going towards where they were taking us, there were rows on both sides of Gestapo and German Shepherds. And we kept walking and the drizzle was coming down and I was so scared. I was so afraid that I developed diarrhea. But you are not allowed to talk so I didn't tell my mother anything. We just kept on walking and walking. And then my mother said, "Children, you have to pray to God." And we did. And as we were walking a black cat crossed the street and somehow somebody said, "Okay, now you know where we are going. We are going to be killed." But my mother said to us, "Don't think that way. Don't think that way." And we kept on walking. When we got to the field and that was an abandoned slaughter house, there were mountains of clothing from the people before that were killed and their clothing was taken off there. They told us to stand in line to wait to be killed and at that time the sun came out and the day was beautiful. The sun was shining. The skies were blue. And so many people standing naked in that line waiting to be killed. And my mother was looking around and she saw this tall Gestapo man. Very, very tall. And she took a chance by walking out of the line and walking towards him and asked him, "Do they kill non-Jews here." And he looks at her and he says, "You're not Jewish?" And she says, "No, I'm not." And he said, "Well, what are you

doing here?" She said, "Well, my husband was taken to prison. He is someplace in one of these cities," she said, "and I decided with my children to come and find him to visit him." So we were walking on this road and as they were bringing down the Jews, they took us along and nobody would listen to us." With that, with one of his hands, he took my mother's hand, my hand, and my sister's hand and he took us out of the line and he said, "Come with me." He took us into that abandoned little slaughter house and he told us to sit and wait. In the meantime he told my sister that she should bring some clothing. So he took her to one of those mountains, and she just picked up whatever clothing she was able to get for my mother, for myself and herself. And she brought it in and we started putting on the clothing. There was some other people in that place, and one of them was a lady with a baby in her arms, and she recognized us.

01:10:34

And when the Gestapo came in with a Ukrainian, because the Ukrainians were collaborators, and they spoke Ukrainian and Russian and Polish. They spoke – and they spoke German. So in order for the Gestapo to understand, you know, what we were saying because we're talking to him in Ukrainian. My mother was talking Ukrainian to him. So this lady turns around and says to him, "They are Jews. Why aren't they killed." And so he hit her, and we just sat there frightened. We didn't know what to say. We couldn't say anything. And he took us out. We were already dressed. And he said to us – he said to the Ukrainian, "You take them to town. You will escort them to town." Because you could not possibly walk on the road back when this was – when they were walking all the Jews to be killed. So the Ukrainian told us to follow him and we did. As we were walking back, on the side of the street, of the road my mother saw many of our neighbors who were walking towards the slaughter house to be killed. And all she did was sigh because it was very painful to see them go. So the Ukrainian didn't say anything and when we got to the city to town and my mother said to him, "Thank you for bringing us back to town," he said to us, "No. We're not letting you go because you are Jewish. You are Jews." And my mother says, "No. I'm not." He says, "Yes, you are. I saw you, how you sighed when you saw them, the Jews walking that road. And we have to interr..." My mother started, of course, lying and saying, "no" and tells him the same story that she told the, the Gestapo. And he says, "No, we have to take you in for interrogation and, and then we'll see what happens and then we'll let you go." So my mother said, "Perhaps I can, you know, give you something. I have some..." you know, some things she had saved whatever. "I'll pay you. Just let us go." And he said, "No." He took us to a little jail which was in the city.

01:13:29

And we were put in a room maybe was 10 by 10 with other criminals and other robbers and thieves and everything like that. They put us in there. And every day, they would take us a few blocks from that area to a Gestapo office for interrogation. And so they were, you know, asking my mother questions and my sister and, of course, we kept telling them the same story. Nothing – me they didn't touch. It was just my mother and my sister interrogating to

see if they lied or if they were telling the truth. And they just couldn't find anything out and this was already like three, four days. One day they decided that the only way they will be sure to find out if we are Jews or not is if they interrogate me. And I was about five and a half at that time. So they came to jail and I remember this Gestapo put me on his lap and said to me – asking me my name which, of course, we changed our names. We changed our identity. We changed everything. And he started telling me what a beautiful little Jewish girl I am. And I sort of jumped at him. I says, "How can you compare me to a Jewish little girl. I am Christian and I am – we have nothing to do – I have nothing to do with Jewish girls. I don't even want to look like them." Well, he kept interrogating me for about an hour and he kept on every second, you know, second word or third word "Jewish little girl, Jewish little girl," and I kept saying you know, "That's not me and we're not and we're just Christians and that's all." Well, after that they realized that you know, they're wrong. That for sure we are from where we told them we were and we were going where we were going, the whole, the whole bit. But then they decided after checking out the town that my mother gave them, there was no one under such a name and the address. There was no such address and so on and so forth – there was no such people. They realized that there was something not right. So they decided to have us interrogated again. So the next day, we were, all of us, walking on the street going towards the Gestapo office. And of course, there was always a Ukrainian who would be our guard because my mother spoke Ukrainian and one of my sister's friends from school saw her and she said to her, "You are still alive?" With that, the Ukrainian realized that we have to be Jews. And so after he took us – he didn't say anything, but after he took us for the next interrogation they decided that we have to be killed. We have to be executed.

01:17:11

So they brought us back to our room in jail. And the way the jail was situated was one room and then the next room were our guards. So if you want – had to go to the restroom, you would have to walk into their room, ask for permission and then, you know, either they would go with you because the restroom was outside the building or they would, you know, or they would keep one of us like if I wanted to go to the restroom my mother would go with me, but my sister would remain in the jail. Or vice versa whichever way. There was always one of us had to stay in that room because they were always, I guess, afraid that we'll escape. Well, after hearing between the other inmates that we are going to be killed my mother quickly thought of escaping. And so that evening that we decided to escape we watched the guard that was sitting in the room next to ours. He fell asleep so we couldn't out walk all of us together because we didn't want our inmates to be suspicious of us. So my mother and I started walking out thinking that if he wakes up and asks us where we're going, we going to the restroom and my sister remains in the room. But he did not wake up, and we just walked out and as we were going down the stairs and you're supposed to turn in to go to the backyard to the bathroom the front door was open. And so my mother said, "We go." Now there was somebody standing in front of that door, but as we came closer to leaving it the man just walked away and we ran away. Now, my mother did tell my sister where we're going to be so when she escapes the same way as we did then we will meet in the area where

some of our people – not our people, our neighbors lived and we decided that's where we're going to meet.

01:19:52

And it so happened that as my sister started walking out after we had left – my mother and I had left. She started walking and he woke up and he said to her, "Where are you going?" And she says, "I'm going to the bathroom." And he says, "Aw, go ahead, your mother's there with your sister." Except he didn't know that we're gone already. And so my sister escaped too. We did meet in the place by the neighbors. And they were hiding us until we decided that the best way to hide will be in our back yard where we had a barn. And so we told one of our neighbors that we'll be in the attic of the barn and so she would once a day bring us something to eat. And the barn was like two stories high. And we didn't know, of course, where my father was because he was going to work as an interpreter. We hadn't heard from him and he didn't know where we were. So here we were in our barn and this neighbor was nice enough to bring us food once a day. But obviously somebody noticed that she was carrying food to the barn, and so one day after about three or four days that we were up there sleeping in the – you know, in the barn on the what we call it – the wood and everything – we just stayed there. Somebody called the SS and they started following the lady. And she realized that, so she started screaming, "Save yourselves. Save yourselves." She never made it to the barn but she was just screaming loud enough for us to hear. So my mother and my sister quickly ran to the other end of the barn of the attic and with their bare hands they broke two panels of heavy wood and we jumped, we jumped. From the two floors we jumped down and we started running away. So by the time the Germans broke into the barn, we were already gone.

01:22:41

Now we really hadn't no place where to go so we went back to the ghetto and in the ghetto, there was, of course, the other Jewish people and my father was there. So we were reunited and we were there again about – let's see, that was in '41. We were together until the second pogrom. Now when they started talking about killing us again, my mother and, of course, with my father, they decided that we have to try and escape from the ghetto. Now the ghetto was always surrounded. It was actually with wires, barbed wires. It was barbed wired and you had guards by the entrances. So my mother and my father decided that we have to escape. We cannot stay for the second pogrom which was a few months later. So we could not escape together. We had to separate. So my mother took me. We were first to escape at night. We just climbed out between the barbed wire and we went to one of our neighbors – not neighbors, to some friends that we had, Gentiles, which were very nice. Thanks to them, I guess, we're still alive. And then next – like an hour later, my sister and then we were reunited, my sister and my mother and myself. We waited for my father and he never showed. We didn't know what happened to him, and we couldn't go back to the ghetto either because the following day there was another pogrom. So after that we were always hopeful that we will find our father. In the meantime, we had to escape.

01:24:59

We had to run away from the city because the second pogrom was already meant to clean out the city – to clean the city out of Jews. So my mother knew someone. Of course, my mother – my father also knew this gentleman who was a motorman on one of the trains. And she paid him off, he should smuggle her and my sister out of the city. Now, like I said before, we didn't know where my father was. Now she could not take me along because “A” I was too little and it was very, very cold. It was in the wintertime. And it was very cold and the clothes that we had really wasn't warm enough. So she made arrangements with a Gentile lady that she should hold, you know, keep me in her house until the spring. And then in the springtime this gentleman who smuggled my sister and my mother out of – to Romania that he will come and he will take me, too, and bring me to my mother. The lady agreed, and my mother gave her whatever we had, you know, just to make sure that I'm safe. She lived – she had two of her grandchildren living with her. They did not know that I was Jewish. And I don't look Jewish either. And so she kept me in back of her house. She had like a little room, a pantry and that – this is where I used to stay and I used to sleep. In fact that pantry was so infested with, with mice that at night, I used to cover myself with a, with a blanket that she gave me and feel those mice crawling all over me. My mother had left before. But before she left she told me that she has to go away with my sister and she gave me a hundred rubles and she told me that in the springtime this gentleman whom I knew will come and he'll bring me back to my mother. That it's only going to be a little while and I'm safer staying with this lady and her grandchildren here.

01:27:42

My mother left, but before she did I cried. And I said, "I have a headache. Don't leave me." But she said she has to go. I guess I understood. And so she gave me the hundred rubles and I remained in the lady's house. With her grandchildren, I used to play. After two weeks the lady became a little panicky and she was really afraid to keep a Jewish child in the house because the Germans notify everyone that if a Jew is found in their house that their house will be burned and the family will be killed. You know, the whole thing. So she was really afraid. And so she told me I had to leave her house two weeks later. Well, at that time I was infested already with lice because nobody gave me a bath and I slept in the same clothes and I lived in the same clothes and I lived in that pantry with the mice. And so I walked out of the house.

01:29:04

And the first thing I did was go into a – to a store – a religious article store and I bought a big cross and I spend my hundred rubles. And then I was so infested with the lice that my head, my skin was all rashes and bloody from scratching it so much. And so I felt that I really needed help and I remembered this lady whom my parents were friendly with and I remembered that we used to visit them every so often. That it's quite a bit outside the city. I



didn't remember the address and I didn't remember the name. But I just remember how we used to walk. And I – that's how I walked. And I made it to the house. And it was winter and cold and the snow was snow maybe five, six inches of snow. And I made it to her house and as I got to her gate her dog started barking so she came out to see who was at the gate and she sees me and she says, "My God, Come in quick. Come in quick." And she takes me to her barn because obviously she must have noticed that I have lice crawling all over me. So she wouldn't take me into her house but she took me into the barn and she – quickly she took off my clothes and put on other clothes and she said to me, "Where are your parents?" I said, "Everybody is killed. Everybody is dead." Because I wanted her to have pity on me. And so she did. She took me to her bathroom. She shaved off my head. She gave me a bath. She gave me a glass of hot milk and a piece of black bread. And I ate it so fast that I got so sick that she thought I was dying. And she couldn't call a doctor and she had to pull all her shades down. Nobody should see that she has any strangers in her house. And she had a son who was at school and she didn't want the son to know either because the son did know me and he knew that I was Jewish. So she gave me a bath and, and she put on one her – of her white gowns on me and it really felt good because I felt clean. And she put some Vaseline on my head and she kept me in her bedroom for a week, a whole week. Now her son didn't know that until one day about three, four days later he said, "Why is your bedroom door locked and the shades are down?" And so she felt that she had to tell him, otherwise he might, you know, he might talk about it on the outside and then they'll send the SS and this is what's going to happen to them. So one evening she sort of surprised him. She said to me, "Come in, I want you to see my son and I want him to see you." And when I walked in, he almost died because I was wearing her white gown and my head was shaven. And he just became so wild, but she said to him, "Don't you ever tell anyone that you've seen Frima." And he said, "I promise, I never will." And so I stayed with her for another week.

01:33:24

In the meantime, like I told you when she gave me that milk and the bread and I got so sick, she didn't know what to do. So her husband and the lady whom I'm very grateful to, she was giving me enemas because I was already blue in my face. I couldn't talk and I was stopping – I was slowing down with my breathing. That's how sick I got. Well, after the war she told my mother that as she was trying to save my life she said, "At the same time I was thinking where am I going to bury your child. I mean nobody supposed to know that there's a Jewish kid in my house." But anyway, I guess, God was very good to her and was good to me. After a few enemas, I'm finally – I woke up and I was stronger and I was able to talk. And after staying a week with her, she said, you know, she can't keep me any longer because she was also afraid that people might become suspicious – her neighbors. And so here I am without a place to stay, without a home to go to. And I knew I couldn't go back to that lady who told me to leave the first place. So I decided that since she had under her house, she had a little – like a little opening with a door, where her dog used to sleep that that's where I'm going to sleep too together with her dog, without her knowing it. And so what I used to do is walk around during the day. Just walk during the day and go to some of the people that I knew and they would give me a piece of bread or give me a potato and I would continue walking and

walking and walking. And then at night when it was already dark in the lady's house and it was quiet, I would sneak in. And the dog knew me and he loved me and he didn't even bark. So he used to lie on my legs, keep me warm, and that's how I slept through the night until also very, very early in the morning, I used to get up and pray to God, of course, and put on my kerchief and start walk out from the – from the – under the house and just walk the streets again.

01:36:16

And one day as I was walking through the same streets that I walked before I heard a couple of young boys saying, "Gee, she might be a Jew because I've seen her walking here once before." Well after I heard this, I never walked in that area again. I just continued walking to different places and different places. And one day I decided to go back in the area where we lived. And we had a cat. It was a Persian cat, beautiful gray, dark gray cat. And I wasn't even near the house, and the cat recognized me and he started following me. Now the Nazis didn't like cats. And as I was walking and the cat was walking after me meowing and meowing, I couldn't pick him up because they knew that most of the Jewish people had cats. And so I wouldn't pick up my cat. And I just kept walking and he followed me until I was passing the building from the kindergarten. And there were two guards sitting outside and they saw my cat following me and they killed him. They killed my beautiful cat. And I just kept walking as if I didn't know anything and as if I – the cat did not belong to me. And so I continued walking for about six months. And that was my daily life, sleeping with the dog, walking during the day. And one day when I came back to sleep with the dog, I saw a light on in the lady's house and so I imagined they might be awake and therefore I should not go in, you know, go under the house. So next to her there was a bombarded house. There was only four walls. Nothing in it. Full of rubbles and wood and stones and everything. That's where I lay down, between the rubbles and I – in order to keep warm because it was winter I would blow in my breathing the hot air into my jacket – in that little jacket. I wore a little jacket, a little skirt, and I had somebody's stockings and that's how I stayed through the night there. And, of course, the next morning I did the same thing. I walked out. And I walked again. Then the way that my mother told me that sometimes in the springtime that this gentlemen will come and pick me up and bring me to her, so I knew that when he'll come and ask the lady for me, she'll tell him she doesn't know where I am because she did not know where I am. She did not know that I was sleeping under her house with her dog. So when April came around, I would just circle the area in the neighborhood so when I see him I would, you know, get in touch with him and he'll be able to take me to my mother. And that's exactly what happened. He came once and she said she doesn't know where I was, but then somehow he decided to come again because my mother told him that this is where I'm going to be, that she is going to keep me until he will, you know, he will come to pick me up. And so one day as soon as I was in that area, I saw him and that's how we met.

01:40:39

Now he made arrangements and late at night the following day he took me to a train station

and he hid me in one of those cars full of coils. And then in the middle of the night, he transferred me to a different train and he just told me to lie on one of the cars, which were transported. There were German jeeps transported to Romania. I met another girl. She was about 10 years my senior and he was smuggling her also. So the two of us were lying on this open car full of jeeps and without knowing that in one of the Jeeps there was a German sitting. He was the watchman. And, of course, the gentlemen didn't know either that, you know, the, the car that we were on that there was danger. And so we're traveling through the night towards Romania. Now Romania, although it was occupied by the Germans, they had some kind of agreement that the Jews will not be killed. They will live in the ghettos and work, but they will not be killed unless they're on the outside of the ghetto. Alright? So it was sort of a little safer for the Jewish people to, to be. We traveled through the night and then at dawn, I hear a door open. And the two of us are lying there. Now she had a Jewish accent. So although I was a little younger, I told her not to speak. She has to be quiet and they really wouldn't know anything. And we'll just make believe we're sleeping. And we hear, you know, the Germans with those boots, those high boots, just stamping. He was – came over to us and we just made believe that we don't, we don't know anything. But we were sleeping. But, of course, he kicks me in my back and I made believe I just woke up and he kicks her and he starts yelling in German and I do not speak German. But since I spoke Yiddish I could understand a little bit, but, of course, I wasn't going to speak to him in Yiddish so I just kept saying to him in Russian that we, we lost my – we lost our mother, and we're looking for my mother and whatever. Anyway, he was furious. He kept yelling in German, and I kept talking to him in Russian and crying, you know, "My mother. My mother. My mother." Well that was early in the morning and then about an hour later or so we were coming closer to the town to the city where we were supposed to get off.

01:43:54

Well, he was so furious. The train stopped and he made us walk down from the train into the fields. So although I was begging and I was crying and both of us were crying, he wouldn't hear of it. He just told us to get off and he kicked us off, and there we are. And we're standing there and crying and crying and I kept on begging him and begging him and finally I changed his mind. He told us to come up again. And so it didn't take too long. After that we arrived at our destination, and my mother wasn't there. Nobody was there. But some people with whom my mother was were there, and this gentlemen who was smuggling us, he brought us to the house where he was supposed to meet my mother so she can pay him. Except the head of the ghetto threw my mother out and my sister because he knew that my mother had some gold pieces which she had saved to pay the gentlemen who smuggled me. And the head of the ghetto wanted that money, of course, for the Gestapo. So he threw them out of the ghetto. And so when I came there my mother wasn't there any longer. My sister wasn't there. And the people told me, you know, that my mother went to another ghetto which was a couple of hours from that area. So they took me to the head of the ghetto and he was Jewish and his wife – they had no children and I was crying and asking him, "Where's my mother. I want to be with my mother. Take me to my mother." And he said – and he was trying to convince me that my life will be so much better if I stayed with them and I won't be

missing anything and I'll have dolls and I'll have toys and I'll have everything. And I kept saying, "I want my mother. I want my mother. Please get me back to my mother." So finally he said, "Okay."

01:46:18

And they – there was what do you call it? Horse and buggy going every – once a day to different little towns where, you know, some of the people lived there. So he got me on one of those little, little coaches with a horse. There were few men, and I was the only child with them. And as we were traveling through the fields, there were always, always like groups of – I don't know if you call them bandits or whatever. They were always used to look for Jewish people and beat them up and take everything away from them cause that's – I guess, that's how they made a living. I don't really know. Well, they stopped our carriage and they started taking all the men off, because they knew we were Jewish. When I saw this, I jumped off the carriage and I kept running, running toward the fields. Now this was springtime. And at that time the harvest, they build those what do you call them? You know, they bunched up the harvest so there was a little – like little tents and I hid in one of those, and I was sitting there and thinking, "Where do I go from here?" And I was praying and then hours – a couple of hours later I heard horses coming in my direction. And I was sure that they were looking for me, and that they were going to get me. So I decided before I run to different haystacks – exactly haystacks – I should look out and see, you know, what is happening. Well, when I looked out I saw the carriage, the wagon with the horse, and the men on it. And so I ran towards the wagon, and they were, of course, very happy to see me and they kept saying how those bandits were looking for me because they noticed a little girl and I had escaped. So they were very angry because those men were beaten. Everything was taken away from them. And they were all injured, all beaten, but anyway they took me up and they hugged me and they kissed me. And we finally made it to a little town where my mother was – were assembled a couple hundred of Jewish people there. And that was before Passover.

01:49:32

And when the word passed around that a wagon came with some men and a little girl, my mother and my sister knew that it had to be me so, of course, they ran out to greet me. And that little town, they was – it was so little that actually the Germans knew where the Jews lived so they didn't have to surround it or, you know, put up barbed wire or anything like that. We lived in one room with this Gentile man. We had one cot and all three of us slept on it. And there was – then there was another mother and a daughter that slept on another cot. We worked in his fields to pay him for sort of rent so my mother and my sister worked on the field and I worked on the field. My job was digging out potatoes and carrying them to his warehouse, and for this I would get a loaf of bread a day. That was very good. We are very lucky. We remained living there for about a year, at least a year – I'd say '40 – '42 – for about a year. And we kept working and then the day before we were liberated, the Germans had dug another grave, a mass grave to kill all of us, like the Final Solution. And the day before their plan, the Russians were bombarding the city – the little town and there was street

fighting going on and we were saved except for those Jewish people who either got killed because their homes were, you know, where they stayed. It wasn't their homes, but wherever they lived, either the house was bombarded or because of the street fighting or whatever. Well, we were lucky to survive. And we went back to look for our father. And all we, the news we had is that he was seen with two Gestapos walking the street, down the street and we never heard from him. And we didn't know that you know, all my aunts and uncles and grandparents and cousins, they're all killed. And we started to build up a new life.

01:52:53

My mother was the widow who tried to put our lives together. And so she was selling and buying and selling and trying to make a go of it. The shoes that I was wearing – we couldn't afford to buy anything, so I would go between the destroyed buildings and rubbles and pick up rope and with a crochet needle I would crochet slippers and then put a piece of cardboard. And these were the shoes I wore. And, God, that's how we lived until we decided that everyone else is dead, no one is left, that we have to start a new life, and just leave Europe. And so we joined other Jewish people who hoped that we can escape to Germany. That was the end of the war. We can go to Germany, and from Germany perhaps we can go to different countries. And so we did.

Q: Okay. This is a good time for us to break. We're getting ready to change the tape now.

01:59:56

End of Tape #1

Tape #2

02:00:05

Q: Okay, we're rolling. Why don't you tell me about leaving your father at the ghetto?

A: When my mother and father decided that we should escape before the second pogrom, I did not want to leave. I wanted to stay with my father or whenever he'll escape I'll go with him. And so I was crying and I said, "Papa, I don't want to go without you." But he insisted. He said, "You must go. You go with Mama." He says, "I'll follow you. Don't worry. I'll follow you." "I swear," he said, "We'll meet again." And so I listened to what he had to say and I believed him. And so I, I went with my mother and we escaped. We made it out of the ghetto. And my father was, was left behind and we just don't know what happened to him except for the fact that people said they saw him walking down the street with the Gestapo. So, so we never heard from him and nobody ever saw him alive. That was the end of my father's life. And that was bad. Anyway, we have to get back to where we left off. I wanted – when my mother came to pick me up when I arrived in the little town, they were all preparing – baking Matzos for Passover at that time. And my sister went and, you know, took me from that wagon and walked me to the house where my mother was with the other people baking the Matzos, and my mother, of course, took me in her arms, put me on her lap, and started looking on me, checking me out, if I was okay. And suddenly she sees a big cross and she says to me, "My child, mayn kind.<sup>1</sup> What is that?" And I says, "Mama, I wanted to live so I can tell you what I went through and I wanted to make sure that nobody is suspicious of me, so I had to buy the cross and make believe that I'm Christian. She took it off and she gave it to one of the priest in that town where we lived and that was the same cross that I used to take off at night when I went to sleep or when I prayed to God and then put it on in the morning. It was really big. It was a very big cross. And then walk around the streets so everyone can see that I have it so nobody would be suspicious of me or have any doubts that I'm anything else but a non-Jew. And this was my life for about six months until the day that I came to see my mother and my fa– and my sister. And after the liberation – after we were liberated, we went back and–

02:04:20

Q: How did you get from Romania back to the Soviet Union.

A: Again, we were going from town to town, from city to city, with wagons, with trains, with whatever was available and we just made it back. But we were very lucky that the day before the execution of all the few Jews that lived in that town, that we were liberated. And it was a terrible experience seeing the fighting in the streets and the wounded soldiers. We used to pull them into the houses and, you know, wash them and then change their socks and then and bandage their, their wounds. And these were the ones who, who, thanks to them, we

---

<sup>1</sup> My child (Yiddish)

survived. And then when we got home, most of our home – house was destroyed, so my mother worked very, very hard selling, dealing, making dollars, and with her own hands, she put together the home again. You know, like she painted it and she plastered it and she did everything. And then we decided that we have to leave, that we weren't safe any longer. So through different, you know, different papers and different channels, my mother got us out of Russia to Poland. And then from Poland we took a train. We took a train to Stuttgart. Yeah, Stuttgart. And we traveled for a few days. There were other – yeah, some Jewish people. And we made it there. And then we were supposed to be smuggled from that area from Poland towards Germany in a truck. So, gosh, that truck was full of people. So many! Some was sitting. Some were lying on the floor. When we got to the border and the guards wanted to inspect the truck to see, you know, what was in the truck. Of course, certainly, they did not think of people, the driver – he stopped and as the guards were coming to open up and see what was doing, he took off. And they started, of course, shooting, but he kept going zigzag, so he was not hit, and we, we made it to Germany. And then there, of course, they had already the displaced person camps and they gave us a place. We stood in Berlin for a little while, and then from Berlin they would send people to different cities. So we stayed for maybe a couple of weeks in Berlin cause during that period I got sick there also. That's a different story. And when I got better they sent us to Bavaria, which had the DP camps, displaced person camps. And there, there we lived, you know, in one room, but we were liberated and we just went on with our lives. There were schools set up, and I went to the school where I learned Hebrew. And the rest of the family, everyone was working and making a couple of dollars. And then, this is a long story short, but I said I'm making a long story short and then we went to – from Germany. We stayed in Germany for about two and a half years. Then we went to France.

02:09:23

Q: How did you get from Germany to France?

A: We went by train. We took a train in Munich, and we went to France, to Paris. We stayed in Paris for about six months. During that period I used to we weren't working, so during that period, I used to go collect food and clothing for the Moroccan Jews who were very poor and they lived in Paris in a very isolated area. And every week I used to bring clothing and food. And since I was young and I was able to get around Paris and whoever needed anything or a place, you know, to go someplace and didn't know, I would, you know, I would sort of take them around. I was their guide. And then while there, they were talking about another war. That was really frightening to us. So, we decided that instead of coming to the United States where we had to wait for a visa and it was a waiting period and we were so scared that we decided to go to Cuba. And there I had an aunt. She quickly made out the papers for us – the necessary papers and did whatever was necessary and we went there. And lived there until I decided to come to the United States.

02:11:14

Q: How long was that?

A: That's nine years later. And I came to the United States and, of course, always thinking about the past and always worry about the future. Never really feeling liberated, although alive, but never really liberated. And then, of course, met my husband.

Q: Where?

A: It was a blind date. I was going to Teacher's Institute for Women. And I met a young lady there and we became good friends. And she said to me she wanted me to meet a nice Jewish fellow. And that's how we met. We got married. And we have three lovely children. And we do think about the past. We do think about the horrors. My husband was in China during World War II, and he was – they were starving. They did not have ghettos or sort of, you know, like we did. They did not have pogroms. They had a ghetto, but they did not have pogroms. But they were starving. There was no food. And we had the pogroms and we had starvation. We had everything. It was a lot of atrocities going on. Horrible experiences. Always frightened, always feeling you're being followed. In fact the nights when I used to walk the streets and I used to hear the German shepherds bark, to this date I dislike these dogs. I really do. And I always used to feel that any minute, you know, they will attack or something, attack me although it was at night and I used to walk like you against, against building between, between trees nobody should see me, nobody should hear me. And everything brings memories. When it drizzles and it's cloudy, it brings memories of the day when they took us to be killed, the first pogrom. When I hear a German shepherd, it brings memories. When I walk the streets, everything seems to bring memories. It's quite frightening. Let's see.

02:14:26

Q: How else did the war affect your life?

A: Everything that I look at brings memories. Everything that I do brings memories. For many years I had nightmares. I used to wake up screaming and screaming. For a while, I used to dream about my father. Just everything. If I pass a barn, it brings memories of the escape, of when we jumped out of the barn and we ran to hide. It just – there isn't a thing that doesn't.... When I see barbed wire, it's memories of how, how really we lived in that enclosed area not being allowed to walk, and when I walked in the streets within that area I had, you know, I had the stars, the yellow stars, the Star of David, one in the back and one up front. And it didn't matter how old you were or how young you were, you still had to wear them. Even in pictures, when I see a German uniform brings memories of how they beat us. I mean I was lucky, but in front of me, grown-ups if they didn't move fast enough, they were beaten with sticks and they were hit with guns. Such horrors. Just horrible things. And just as they affect an older person, it certainly affects a child. It's just that we grow up a little stronger perhaps than the elderly people do. And my mother suffered with that ear that, that she was hit. She suffered for until the day she died she wasn't able to hear too well. And it was also memories,



awful memories. And more memories when there's – when you lose your father. You lost so many dear ones. Part of your life you lost. It was just a lot of anger. Anger to the world for doing such things, and not to feel when all of us had to stand naked – such inhumanity. We were just made to feel like animals. And the beatings that one constantly had to go through there, all the people. Then I was, I was from the lucky ones yet. Well, now when we look back we hope that the past is remembered so the future will be much better future for every human being. Really for every human being cause I don't think that the world could possibly survive with such horrors like we did in the '30s and '40s. And we hope there's gonna be a better tomorrow, which I always prayed every day while alone until I came together – reunited with my mother and my sister. And then when we finally made it to the United States of America, I still don't feel free. I don't think that a survivor will ever feel free. It's something that was done to his life, to his way of feeling, thinking. Something that nobody can understand, only the survivor himself somehow will have to sort of adjust himself to the world and do his part as a human being. Oh, gosh.

02:19:49

[Displaying photograph]

A: This was home. This was in '45. That is me, in 1945, at home after I had gained a little weight. My mother was able to get me a sweater and a little hat. It felt good. So she called a photographer. She said, "You look so great, I must take a picture." And this picture was taken in the house.

[Displaying photograph]

A: That's me in the DP camp. The camp was called the Schlupfing in Bavaria. That was in 1947. These are the barracks that we lived in.

02:21:10

Q: Tell us where you were. At what point did this occur? Okay. Please tell us your story.

Q: Well, during the period when I was walking the street, there were days that I couldn't get any food cause I was afraid to go in certain areas in case somebody will see me. So I was walking on the streets and I saw this restaurant with a big glass window. I looked it. There were a lot of people sitting there and eating and I was standing – I was so hungry and there was one empty seat next to a gentleman so I figured may as well go in and perhaps somebody will feel sorry for me and pay for, for my soup. So I walked in. I sat next to this gentleman and I ordered the potato soup. And as I finished eating it and the waitress came to ask me for the money to pay, I started crying and I told her I had lost my money. So the gentleman next to me, I guess, felt sorry and he said to me, "Don't cry, little girl," and he paid for my soup. And I just ran out very quickly. I didn't say a word, I just thanked him. I ran out and continued walking and walking and walking until the night came and I went back to my

little dog under the house to sleep. As far as how people, people that wanted to help us out and they wanted to offer us food some of them would offer what they had and that was pork and other meats, but coming from a background like we did, we refused the type of food that they offered us since it's not kosher. So we always kept in mind who we were. We could not show it. We could not tell anyone about it. But we felt this is what we are and no matter what happens we have to remain with our way of being who we are. We are Jewish. There was no two ways about it. And so every night when I used to go to sleep with my dog, I would take my cross off and pray to God, and then in the morning before I put the cross on, I would pray to God again. Put it on. Shake off the straw because when I got up from the straw and with my dog, I started walking again. And that was the story for six months until the gentleman came and smuggled us to my mother. This is just some of the stories.

Q: Okay. Thank you.

02:24:47

[Conclusion of interview]