

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Lily Margules  
January 3, 1990  
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## **PREFACE**

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Lily Margules, conducted by Linda Kuzmack on January 3, 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.

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# LILY MARGULES

## January 3, 1990

Q: We're on camera.

A: Yes.

Q: Would you tell me your name please?

A: My name is Lily \_\_\_\_\_ Margules, and I was born April 19, 1924, in Vilno, Poland. Before the second world war, my name was Lily \_\_\_\_\_ and this how I was known by all my friends.

Q: Would you tell me, Lily, about your parents and your family when you were a small child?

A: Uh...I was...I had a very sheltered and pampered childhood. Both my parents were professionals. My father, David \_\_\_\_, was a self-made man. He was a registered pharmacist...uh...despite the...that he came from a poor religious family, he became very successful after he became a pharmacist. And he met my mother when he was in the University and both...they were students. She studied dentistry and she belonged to the upper class, upper middle class and my grandfather was not too happy where...about this marriage, but when my mother became a dentist and opened her own office, he consented and they got...they got married. My mother's name was \_\_\_\_\_. And she was really a very good professional, a very gracious lady, and a very good mother and wife. My parents belonged to this...this students that actually lived very...very actively participated in the Russian revolution and even when they became successful, they still spoke Russian at home and all...all the ideals about the equality and fraternity were very much imbedded in their minds and this...they embedded in us also. Despite that they worked very hard, there were always time for cultural events and they used to go the theatre there, a very nice college and they had an excellent social life. I had a younger sister that was born 4 years after us. Actually I was born on the street called \_\_\_\_\_4 and my sister was born in the apartment and my mother's closet became too small and we moved to \_\_\_\_\_ 38, which was...which was the apartment and office that I lived til the second war world II. I have very fond memories of my childhood, and my parents really tried their best to...to make us, me and my sister very happy. As soon as I was born I had a nanny and the nanny became a very big part of my life. And even my father who was the real father \_\_\_\_\_ was afraid of my nanny because she became the boss. She adored my mother, but she actually was the only ones that stood up against my father and I...it was sometimes when I used to go up and downstairs, it reminded me about her attitude, and her friends because every day she used to take me to the park. When I used to go to the park, I had to be dressed up...uh...like a little princess. I...I had to wear a little hat, and I had to wear gloves and new shoes. And when she came there, she met all the other nannies and they were talking and gossiping about their ladies and their bosses what they do there and what they...and what they were and how they spent their evening. And one...one wanted to tell the life of their ladies more interesting than the other. If my nanny decided that the dress I was wearing this day was not good enough, she didn't even consult my father or my

mother, she just went to the store where we had credit. She bought me material. She went to the dressmaker. She ordered a dress and this was it. And so my father got the bill and he asked what happened? How come you're spending so much money on little girls that will grow up? She used to say, "I cannot...I cannot allow my little girl look worse than any other one. Do you want us to be poor? Do you want people to think that we are poor? We have...we have to have appearances." And my father doesn't even say anything. When I had...when I was 6 years old, and my parents send me to a private school. This was a school that Jewish children used to go, but we were taught only Polish. And the name of the school was the Private Coeducational. It was called gymnasium, and it was a private co-educational school called \_\_\_\_\_. And it was located on the street on \_\_\_\_\_ ll. It was a very exclusive school and I have very fond memories about it, because this teacher was a really dedicated and knowledgeable people. The atmosphere was very congenial and we had all the facility that very often I wish my children would have when they were growing up. Because we had slides, we had clinical laboratories, physical laboratories and we had the \_\_\_\_\_, and we used to really...had very nice nature trips. And the only thing what I cannot forget how we used to admire and respect our teacher who were really trying their best to make our life interesting and also the lessons that they teach were very exciting. When we studied about the French Revolution, they made like a mock judgment and we were discussing about \_\_\_\_\_, head rolled, and in no time we knew what was going on with...without worrying about the book. And this...I had a little...uh...I had a very big interest in reading, and very soon...as soon as I studied to...I knew how to read, my father on the suggestion of my mother took me to the library and then a new world opened before me because I started to read. I...there were days that I had...I finished a book a day. Of course, in the beginning was just children's books, but a new world opened in front of me and my mother was very happy because she believed very strongly about culture. She used to drag me and my sister to all...to children theatres to ballet. We didn't have an opera, but we had an operata. And she really used to pump culture into us because she used to say...I remember it well, "that the person who doesn't appreciate the music or poetry or finest things of life is really half...half blind and half...hard of feelings, because this everything is free, and you have to really appreciate it. Coming back to...one second to my mother, I have to tell you that she was my best friend and I was very proud of her because not only was she a big beauty and a real lady, I never saw her without a hat or a pair of gloves, but also she was a very compassionate person. She had a very big clientele, and I remember rich landowners coming in front of our house and with those little...uh...horse...horse and buggies, and...and those tall, strong, Polish men were just kissing my mother's hand because she was such a good dentist. And they used to bring all kinds of presents, but on the other hand the poor people around us knew if they have a toothache or they have a any problem, they just come, ring the bell and come to the office and my mother would never ask them how much they can pay. They pay how much they could, and if they couldn't pay it was alright also. So she always imbedded in our mind the concept of charity. This idyllic life lasted through 1935, and this was the time when I started to feel the wind of anti-Semitism. My father...my father was working as a registered pharmacist in a very big pharmacy that was a government pharmacy from the social services. Every worker was involved in it. Only 3 Jewish pharmacists were working there. They were the students that were on top of the class. In 1935, my father was told and also his two

colleagues that they have...in order to work there, they have to obtain a Masters Degree in pharmacy. Of course, they had no other choice. They studied...they were studying. I was a little girl. My father used to close himself in...in his bedroom and work and study. He used to go on field trips because the old fashioned pharmacist didn't go and just and pick up the medicine from the shelves. They have to prepare it. And finally when the tests came...uh...there was an oral test and there was a written test. The man...the professor that gave him the test was a known anti-Semite and my father was very afraid that he won't pass the test. But he passed the test with flying colors. The written test and the oral. And as he was getting up from the chair...he was practically by the door, after he...telling him about so many complicated chemicals formula and everything, all of sudden, the professor asked him, "David \_\_\_\_, and what is the chemical...uh...formula for carbonated water with the C2 O3, and my father was so nervous and so upset that he got a mental block and he couldn't answer him. And he just didn't pass him. So, of course, he had to study enough and he went to Warsaw and after a short time we got the telegram he did pass it. But after a very short time, a decree came and Jews were not allowed to work as pharmacist in a government institution, and my father lost his job. I didn't tell you that my...my father had a brother and two sisters. And my...my grandparents on my father's side were very religious, very religious people, and my grandmother had 16 children but only four survived because...uh...the children were...died in the infancy, and after 12 children died, she...there was...uh...folklore in our family telling us that she went to a very famous rabbi and the rabbi told her that he...that if you wanted your children to live, you have to dress them only in white. Even...only in white, even if they grew...grow up and be able to go to school. And when the child will ask you, "Mama, how come everybody dresses in all kinds of different colors and I'm wearing in white...I'm dressed in white," then you can take off and dress the child in any colors. And this what happened. And she...the 13 and the 14 and 15 and the 16th child survived because she kept them in white. And my...my father had a brother and two sisters. The...the...the...the younger brother immigrated to Argentina with one of the sisters went to the United States, and one of the sisters lived with her parents in Poland and this...this...I just wanted to mention it because this was something happening and we were talking about this in the family. And so coming back to 1935 when my father lost his job, we...my mother had a very close knit family. And, as I mentioned before, they were upper middle class, and they were six children, two brothers and four sisters. One sister, as a young girl, got married and immigrated to the United States. One sister got married to a very rich man that was a manufacturer of papers and...uh...my oldest, my mother's oldest sister was a registered nurse. Her name was Sonia Lipquwich Perski, and she was actually my second mother and my...my mother, as I mentioned you, mentioned to you, was also a professional. And they were a very knit families. The two brothers, one the older brother was a publisher of a Jewish paper in Kaunas, and the younger brother...his name was Soloman, was a dentist who didn't practice dentistry but opened a...a business...uh...dental supplies for dentists and mechanics...and dental mechanics. When it happened, the whole family got together. It was like a family council and they decided that my father has to get to himself together and buy himself a pharmacy. He couldn't buy a pharmacy in Vilno, but they found for him a pharmacy in a small town called Soley, but then a very tragic thing occurred. They didn't want to sell a pharmacy to a Jewish pharmacist. So imagine a pharmacist, a Christian of Polish persuasion

had to be found, a sum of money collected by the family had to be given to him and his name the pharmacy was bought. This happened in 1938. And my...my...actually my family split because my mother and my sister had to go to Soley and find an apartment near the pharmacy for my father and we stayed in Poland because my...we were going to school, and my mother was practicing in Vilno. And this was the time that the very tragic event occurred. My mother got sick. My mother developed cancer, and when my father took her to the doctor and she was operated on in one of the best hospitals in Vilno, she was...she was opened and closed and the professor told my father that she had 6 months to live. The cancer spread all over her body and you have two little girls. You have to live. But no...don't count on your wife. It was a terrible tragedy for us. We were, as children, not told about it. And the only thing that...that we knew that she was going for treatment. Then it was cobalt treatments and she used to feel really very bad but a little miracle happened because after 6 months she went into remission and she even started to practice because her patients were so dedicated to her that they...we had to take off the bell from the door because everybody would come and just wanted to find out how she is doing. Now I have to tell a little story about our dog. We had a dog called Rex, which is in...with the \_\_\_\_ in Latin. And we actually grew up with the dog because when I was born, my parents bought this dog and she was our best friend. The dog always when we used to eat at home, the dog was stay in the dining room under the table we used to throw him the best morsels. The only thing if...when the dog was not present when the guests came and my parents were entertaining their colleagues, it was a thing in our family that the...that the children had to be seen but not heard, and they had to disappear together with the dog. My...when my mother got sick and she was lying in bed, the dog was sitting near here and there was no power that you should take away the dog from her bed. The only thing that he used to go...he used to go to the kitchen when he ...where he had his dish to eat. And he would eat, drink a little water and lie on his little pillow near my mother. And the dog...when my mother didn't survive, this what...we felt actually the tragedy in my young life because on May the 22st, the 24th 1939, my mother passed away. And it was something unbelievable because I was sleeping and all of a sudden I was wakened up by the howling of the dog. When my mother passed away, the...the dog started to howl so strong that they had to take him out from the house with the...with the force. And it was such a big tragedy for me because I adored my mother. I was proud of her. The best day of the week was for me Friday because she wasn't working, and she used to take us to all the functions and used to...she used to take us to the park. And I was so proud of her because she really was so beautiful that strange men used to tip their hats for her...uh..say to her, call her like princess or madonna or queen. And I was so proud of it all. My...this is my mother! So it was a terrible tragedy for me. We had a tremendous funeral. All the children from my class and from my mother's class...uh...from my sister's class came. And so many colleagues and so many patients that we didn't even realize that she had...that she was known by so many people. And the dog wanted to go in this...in this cortege, but he was...the funeral cortege, but he was taken. When I came home from the funeral, I was very broken up and I really was so desperate that I thought that the...that the world is finished for me. And I remember it was May...May is a beautiful month in...in Vilno because all the lilacs are growing and the air is just perfumated with jasmine and lilacs. It is the most beautiful time of the year. So on a Saturday when \_\_\_\_ my little friends took me out and we were walking through the streets

and the sun was shining and the birds were singing and I said to my God, "The life is going on and my mother is not any more with us." I couldn't find peace. My teachers came to visit me and I was a very good student. Have to remember I was a teacher's pet and studying was very easy for me. And all of a sudden...uh...my grades fell down and my teachers when they came to me, they said to me, "You have to study. You have to take yourself together." And I told them, "I don't have nothing to...anymore studying. I having nothing to live anymore and the writings, articles to the papers because each class had a class paper. Was a time even when I was a publisher, an editor actually of the paper and the best article from this paper used to go to a school paper. It was called The Student's Friend. And it was the only school in the whole city that had a printed paper from...from the students. It was a fascinating paper. Oh...sometimes if I...when I remember myself about, I said, "How come they were so serious about the event? How come we understood so much?" And I was really surprised.

Q: Can you tell us. Let's...let's move forward a little bit if you could.

A Yes.

Q: Can you tell us what happened now? After your mother's death and the war broke out.

A: Yes.

Q: Can you tell us.

A: Well, afterwards we...uh...we went...it was summer vacation, and we went to live with my father and my Aunt Sonia came and she stayed with us a month. She kind of became our surrogate mother because she felt...she felt that it was really a big tragedy for both of us. And...and we had a very sad summer, but actually did...uh...the whole world fall apart...fell apart for us on September 1, 1939. I was sitting in my room and preparing actually myself to go to school because I was supposed to go back to Vilno to continue study. And then my nanny came running into the room and said that my father wants to see us immediately in the pharmacy. And me and my sister and my nanny were running, and my father said, "Sit down. The war broke out...broke...break...broke out. The Germans just invaded Poland, and we don't know what to do...be, but don't think about going back." And then it started. It...it started because the...the little town where I was belonged to Russia. I couldn't go back to Vilno. I was sent...uh...to school in a...in a town called Oshmeyania where I was studying and my sister stood with my father and this to...this was till 1940. 1940 during the vacation...uh...vacation time, I went back to Vilno and I stood in the house of my aunt. And I went to visit my friends. This was really a very sad situation because the whole class fell apart when the all 45 children, some went to one school that was teaching Pole...in Polish. The other one...Vilno became a part of Lithuania. It was...uh...it was very important for the Lithuanian to teach their children Lithuanian...Lithuania so they had to teach Lithuanian and some of them went to Russian school. And very...it was a big rumor and very, very soon on June 1941, we were taken over by the Germans. When we were...we were taken over by the German, there were...there were...we actually...the part that we were...were...at the Russian occupation, and

there was...uh...a truck standing in front of our pharmacy and there were Russian doctors that were asking my father to join him and go back to Russia before the German occupied, but my father said that in a war you have to have a roof under your head and he didn't want abandon it. And very soon the German came. I will never forget the...when the German came to the little town and right away, they segregated the Jews. They started to persecute Jews. The Polish people were very belligerent, and they start a kind of pogrom, and one of the rich landowners came to my father and said to him that you should, that he will be sent...some people they would take our belongings and he will give us shelter...he will give us shelter in his little...it was like not a big castle, but a small castle. And he said because he was very good when the Communists persecuted him as a landowner in Russia. And my father and my sister went and I was sitting here with the other belongings. As it happened on the way, they were attacked by Polish peasant who robbed my father, put him against a tree, shot him in front of my sister, and my sister became hysterical. She was just a little, little girl there. They kind of let him go. And my father and my sister walked a long time and they came back and we...we had to escape from there because the...the...not only...not only the German were after us, but the Polish peasants were after the Jews. And we..we took shelter in a Rabbi's house and my father arranged with a peasant, he took us to Vilno, as two little peasant girls to my Aunt's house.

Q: Tell us...tell us...can you describe that journey for us? Tell us...tell us what it was like for you as a little girl escaping.

A: Well, you know I will be Jewish so it was a very dangerous journey and we left very early. We were put on a wagon and we were put \_\_\_\_\_. And we were told to sit quiet and he put some hay over us. And nobody from the town knew that we were escaping. My father didn't want to go with us. He wanted to stay yet because he didn't want to endanger our lives. So we were...he left us on...just in the beginning of the town, and then in Vilno it was already a curfew. The Jews...uh...were given all kinds of edicts. They couldn't walk. Uh...They had just to walk in the \_\_\_\_\_. They couldn't walk on the sidewalk. They had to have arm...arm bands with the...uh...with the Jewish star, and they had arm bands in the front and in the back. They were a certain time that they could home. All the jewelry and all the values the radio were confiscated and every day, there were men taken to work and they never came back. So when I came to the outskirts from the Vilno, I...I knew where my aunt lived, but I didn't know about all those things and to \_\_\_\_\_ was very dangerous because I was walking on the sidewalk. But I didn't know how it happened, and when we...after a long, long journey, we finally arrived to my aunt's house and she looked at us like we would come from the...from Hell. She couldn't imagine that we came there. And then after a few days, my father came, also came. And we stayed with...with my aunt til September 6th, 1941. This was the day it was...the ghetto, Vilno ghetto was started. And I have to tell you the way the German organized the starting of Vilno ghetto. This was just amazing how much sadism and organization was involved in this. Vilno was a very cultural town and there were all kinds of layers of society, but there were...there were \_\_\_\_\_. There were people that were assimilated. There were people that were very much pro-Israel. There were people that were very much for...for Jewish culture. But there was one section that were poor Jewish people



lived there. It was...the streets were...I remember \_\_\_\_\_. It was in the \_\_\_\_\_ it was in the center of Vilno, and those Jews in the middle of the night were taken out from their homes and was taken in a place called Ponary. These are...Ponary is a big forest where mass graves still are there. And they were shot right there, and they made...their poor dwellings were made a place for the ghetto. So as I mentioned to you, it came a day when edict came and all the Jews had to abandon their possessions, their apartments, their homes, and they were taken to the ghetto. There were two ghettos. One...number 1 and number 2. The number 2 ghetto was liquidated in a very short time. When I say liquidated, all the people were taken again to Ponary. Some of them were shot on the way, and some of them were shot in the mass graves. I happen to be in the second ghetto. When we came to the ghetto, it was a very terrible experience because we were carrying with us our meager possessions and the Poles lined up on the street and when they saw somebody of us wearing two coats, they used to say, "Aw, look at this Jew. She is...he is wearing two coats. Let's take one of them off." And they would just grab and take it away, and there and nobody even interfered. The conditions in ghetto were terrible. One family was put on in...two or three families were put on one room. The cold and the hunger and no sanitary conditions, and no facilities to cook. It was just...it was just a very dark era in our lives. Uh... right away, the...the Germans put a wall and there were gates and you could only go out from the ghetto if you had...if you had a work permit. All you could only actually survive if you worked because the...the portions of the...the Russians are very...very meager and people were very anxious to work. The...the...in the ghetto inside, there were...Jews organized a Judenrat. This is...was a...this was actually like...uh...uh...organization for Jews for social services, for...for helping each other, for organization and also they're the Jewish policeman that was standing by the ghetto. There was a...uh...talking about me, I went one day to Judenrat because we had to survive and I was lucky to get a job. There was a German asking young girls...put them...if they want to work, put them into a column and we were...after a long walk, we find ourselves on the airport of Polobonic. And this airport of Polobonic our job was unload the wagons with big chunks of coal or potatoes or also wintertime we had to clean the airport. And we usually, we worked really very hard because the work was very long and the conditions for working was so bad there was always a German with...uh... how you call it? The one that who used the horses. (laughing) standing behind you and you had to work and...and we really were miserable. At night when we used to come to the gates...gates of ghetto, we were practically exhausted. But the only way we could help ourselves because we could steal a little potatoes from the wagons, and when we came we could cook them. And sometimes we had...we had the chance to cook a little potato. We didn't have salt right there on the \_\_\_\_.

They...they...they used...they used to let us. My father got a job in the pharmacy of the Judenrat...of the Judenrat, was like a Jewish government because in the section of the ghetto there was also a Jewish hospital and they had the pharmacy. My aunt worked in the hospital and my sister was just a little girl. And she...she doesn't even work and she was just very miserable in...in the ghetto. She became actually smaller than she was, and when I used to bring a few potatoes it was a big treasure for her because the Russians were very meager. But I have to tell you that there was a cultural life in Vilno ghetto. They were a lot of songs written, a lot of poems written. There was even a cafe. I never went there. There were...were \_\_\_\_\_ theatres, and people really were trying to survive. Very soon, there was

resistance...resistant organization formed. And those resistance young boys and girls became active. It was a very friendly sign because you could get shot on a... but some how...some how they functioned. And they were trying to get out as much as possible Jews from the ghetto. But in order to get out from the ghetto and become a partisan and they were located in the Runigso and Narah forests. They...you had to have a gun and gun...a gun was very expensive. When my family came to the...to the ghetto, we were very poor because everything was taken away from us. All of a sudden we found ourselves really without any fund...funds to survive. You could...for money, you could buy some food. You could buy some clothes. We didn't...we didn't have it. So no matter how my father wanted us to escape to ...to the partisans, we had no means. I...after...uh... when...you want...there is a poem that was written by one of the girls that used to walk everyday with me to the Polo barrack, and if you wanted I can read it for you.

Q: Read it.

A: The poem is in Yiddish. And it...it was written by...by a really...a little girl and she said like this.

Q: Tell us...if you would, tell us what does the poem say in English. Can you translate it for us?

A: Yes. The poem say it is enough. It is enough. Every day this...our shoes are walking on this hard cobblestone, and our...and our feet in the...in the shoes are getting very tired to...to go those kind of distances, and we are walking and we are asking...we are asking, "Has the world forgotten about us?", and we are begging and saying, "It is enough. It is enough. We have no strength to walk in our shoes on those hard cobblestones."

Q: Tell us about the girl who wrote this.

A: This was...this was just a school girl that was very...uh...I don't...I am not sure if she wrote anything more, but she...I became very friendly with her and one morning when I came to work she gave me a piece of paper and this here was the poem. I was very excited and I had all other little friends and \_\_\_\_\_ was the \_\_\_\_\_. And all of us when we had a chance, we were sitting on this...on this tall, you know...uh...wagon full of stone...full of those big pieces of...uh...of...uh...big pieces of coal that we had to unload and we stopped and we were all reading this poem, and the German guard started to scream and yell at us, "What are you doing? What is kind of this?" So right away we took this piece of paper and we put it inside you know, and we were afraid because they were...they were just beating us up for no reason. But some how girls made copies of this poem and many times we used to walk, you know, to work a bit and we used to recite it. And so in 1948, when I had a little...I came a little bit to myself, the first thing what I did I remembered the story...it was like written down in my heart. I wrote it down and I said, "Let me remember this. How we used to walk to work and we used to recite this poem because there is so much truth and so much pain and so much injustice asking, "How come this injustice was done to us." I just like people to know about it. Uh...I like to tell you about another very sad experience I had in ghetto. The

job in \_\_\_\_ ended and I...one day I went again and they were asking people...the young girls, the women...uh..for work. And I went there. And I was walking. I was very sad. And we were walking a long time on this hard cobblestone. They were very narrow streets in my...in my town. Everybody was just walking in a column in the middle. And then the column stopped and to my horror I saw that they stopped before the school that I used to spend and my...that I used to study as a child. It was the gymnasium \_\_\_\_\_. It was in \_\_\_\_\_11. And this whole column was taken to a big...uh...a big...uh..cellar, full of old and rotten potatoes. And our job was to sort out the potatoes because this was...our school was taken over by the Nazis and they...actually it was the Gestapo and they...all the classrooms and all the facilities were taken over, and they made offices. When I first came there, my first instinct was to just...forget about everything, and just run up to the classroom when I spent my...my childhood. And it was such a \_\_\_\_ experience I had an impulse and I ran out from the column and the German right away took me back and gave me over my back, I came home with a...a red sign all over and I was sitting right there and he told us to sort out the potatoes. As I was...uh..coming every day, I met the janitor from our school and the janitor had two daughters. And would you believe that the first...the two daughters knew me as a child because I sat at this school as a 6 years old and I went til 1939, so they knew me every day. They used to help me with my galoshes. In the bad weather I used to share with them my lunch. And the first thing when they saw me, they said to me, "My God. I heard that all of you were dead. How come you're still alive?" They said their goodbye. This were their hello that I had from them. And we were working there, and also I met there one of my professors. My prof...his name was Professor Moderstain. He actually...he was working there, tending to some chickens. He was my favorite teacher, and I don't think his mind worked alright. First of all, he didn't recognize me when I approached him. It was dangerous to approach a man because we were segregated. Women and men were segregated, but I approached him. And he was...and he was just talking to himself and then I was told that he saw his wife, his daughter, and his son shot in front of his eyes. So this was the only time that I saw him there. And imagine seeing this professor just sitting there and actually dancing, tending to some chickens. I...uh...I developed...one day when I was working and I didn't have shoes, I developed an infections. And when I came to the ghetto door, it was already late at night, I stepped on a...on a nail and the nail was rusted and the infection backed up, all the way up and I was...I got in my groin, I called a big boil and my father and my aunt saw it, they took the right away to the hospital. I was operated on and I was...I was in the hospital. In the meantime, when I was in the hospital I saw my father taken out from the pharmacy because the situation in ghetto became very dangerous. There were three kinds of workings papers in the ghetto. There was blue, yellow, and pink. The yellow one was a permit to work. The pink one was a permit for the children for the family of the working and the blue one was a temporary working paper. And many times in the ghetto, the Germans used to come in the middle of the night and they used to take out the people just for no reason and we never saw them again. People used to develop secret rooms, and once I was sitting in a secret room in a attic and I heard Jews being...being taken to...uh...to Ponary and I heard with my own music, violins playing. Because the Germans didn't want the...the people to panic or they didn't want them to...to escape or to resist them so they kind of put music...some musician in front of the column and this way they sooth their nerves and I heard...I heard the music. I

was always thinking in case they will find me I...I and my sister we have to go by the side, and we have to escape. We have to escape. We have to somehow run to the partisan. I don't...I don't want to be taken to Ponary. Because we knew what this was going on. That there were people were just shot and also we heard about the crematoria and we heard also about people from other places being taken to concentration camp. It...it was very strong rumor in the ghetto.

Q: You talked about a secret room. How did you get into this secret room?

A: As I told you, the dwellings in the ghetto were very old and there were mainly secret...many passages and many rooms that men used to put very heavy commodes or a big dressing...uh...piece of furniture and camouflage the door and behind the door there was a little room or a cellar or an attic and people used to just sit there all the time when the Germans, the Ukrainians, or the Lithuanians used to run to the ghetto and take anybody. Anybody! Able body! And they used to just take them quote unquote to work, but we no, never saw them again. One of my uncles was taken this way. I forgot...I...just before, if I may come back. I forgot something if I may come back. On the day that we were taken to the ghetto...talking about my uncle. My Uncle Joseph Perski was a merchant who..who traded in fresh and dried mushrooms, and had the last connections with Polish peasants and he doesn't...didn't look like a Jew. On the day that we were taken to the ghetto, he called my Aunt Sonia, and he told her that he is not going to the ghetto. He has a lot of connections and he will try to survive as an Aryan, and he asked her to join him. And she refused. She said to him she cannot do it because she promised my mother on her death bed that she will take care of me and my sister, and she cannot abandon them. So she asked him to take us. He couldn't. Because it was just...my father was also...my father looked very Jewish. We looked Jewish. He couldn't do it. So my mother...my mother...my second mother, my Aunt Sonia sacrificed her life for us because she refused to join him and she went to the ghetto with us. And she was like the pillar of strength for us. I would like to continue now about the last days of the ghetto.

Q: Hold it. This is a good place to pause, but before we do that we had been talking about the secret room.

A: Yes.

Q: Uh...I'd like to know how you go into a secret room.

A: I got in the secret room because a friend of my father that used...that lived in the same apartment came...approached him one day and said that he and a few men found a place and they would like...they would like us also to join there. When they will...when they will hear there is a big commotion, and they are looking for men, my father should come right away from the hospital and we should all meet in the secret room. And the secret room was just behind a very tall...tall dresser. And you couldn't find it because they ...they....they used to go into the room, and the men used to put the dresser against the door and we would just sit

there very, very quiet and listen for all the noises and...and then when everything's quiet down, a few hours later we would come out and then we will hearing crying. This mother was taken away and this father was taken away and this...and this is how...you see, and this is how the German was liquidating the ghetto. I have to tell you there is a very interesting story about the man in charge of the Vilno ghetto. Her name...his name was Jacob Genz. Jacob Genz was an officer in the Lithuanian army, married to a Christian Lithuanian, and he had a son with her. And when he became a commandant of the Vilno ghetto, he surrounded himself with a lot of policeman and officers that were Jews that escaped from Poland and were officers in the Polish army. They were all dressed as officers and they kind of were keeping peace and order inside the ghetto. Genz in my opinion did a lot of good for the Jewish population because he developed a certain rapport with the Germans. I remember there was...the commandant, the German commandant of the Vilno ghetto was called Weiss and he was an SS man, Gestapo and the...the commandant of the guard was Malver. When Malver was standing by the gates of ghetto, there was a massacre because he was just beating up people that were coming from work. Some of the people that came from outside tried to smuggle in some food, some a piece of bread, a potatoes, something to...to help their families in ghetto. They were starving. If he found somebody, he would just beat up. There were shootings. He was a living horror. And somehow he developed a rapport with them, and when they used to come to him and each time ask for more people, more people, he used to pacify them and he used to help. Help to maintain the stability of the ghetto. Very...very soon before the liquidation of the ghetto, the resistance started to send...to print all kinds of leaflets. Jews, the end is near. Don't go to the slaughter. You have to fight with what you can. If you don't have a gun, fight with ever...with a stone, with a knife, with ever you can. We will not survive anyhow, but we have to be resistant. But ...but people were brainwashed by the Germans, and really everybody was so involved in days of this struggle and was so weak and was...was so embroiled in this one thing, to survive that unfortunately inside the ghetto, there was not too much resistance when the time came. And I...

Q: Excuse me. We're going to pause here and we're going to change tapes.

End of Tape #1

Tape #2

Q: One more question about the secret room and then we'll go on.

A: Yes.

Q: When you were in the secret room, you told us about...that you heard people being taken to Ponary. Can you tell me what you actually saw?

A: Well, I...me and my sister, we were lying on the floor and there was just a little...a little opening. It was an attic and between the old wood, there was a very small opening. You really had to look with one eye because we were very afraid that we will be noticed. And when I heard this music, this fiddle playing, I...I got very excited. I didn't know what kind...what kind of fiddle playing, so I put my eye to it and I saw fiddler playing in the front...in the front of the column and man, women and children were taken in columns, taken out through the streets of the ghetto, going toward the gates. And I with my own eyes heard...saw the people taken there. Women were crying. The women were carrying little children, and they were just...and I heard the music and many times in my nightmares, I hear the music they were playing. And they were just walking very slowly toward the gate of ghetto, and the only way to...where they were taken...this was just only one direction, was Ponary. This was the only...the only place they were taken. And I heard...there was a woman that escaped from there. When I was in the hospital, she escaped from there and she was in the hospital, and she was telling us that they were told to...to make their own graves, and they were shot indiscriminately. The only way she survived because there were so many bodies on top on her she wasn't shot, and then she crawled in the middle of the night and she got...put...just went from one place to another and she...she didn't know what to do so she came back to the ghetto. There were a lot of people that actually didn't believe her, but I with my own ears I saw this woman. I heard that she lost her mind later on...uh...because when she was talking about it, she was in tremendous shock. But I...this what I heard that she lost her mind and she was just babbling away later on. I don't know what happened to her. But this was...I heard and saw her when I was in the hospital.

Q: Okay. Thank you. Tell us about the liquidation of the Vilno ghetto. What happened to you?

A: Uh...I was in the hospital and I...I had this big...big inflammation and I...since my physical conditions was very poor, I had this big opening that did...was full of pus and didn't...didn't heal. And so I was really...my prognosis were really very bad, but...uh...one day it was a few days...must be before the liquidation to the Vilno Ghetto, my aunt who was a nurse came into my room and she said that she heard rumors that the German gave against our commandant, you know, to mark them that they need more Jews. So possibly for work. And he decided instead of giving young, able bodies, he will take us all the sick people from the hospital and just to have the count. So she..she told me she'll help me to get dressed and in the middle of the night, we left the hospital and it is just one of the things all of a sudden I...I...I walked and we went to our place where we...where she...where we were living, and

she started to take care of her...herself of me. And she was changing the bandages and in...in a few days, it was September 23, 1943, in the middle of the night we were waken up by...by a friend of ours that always took us to the secret place to the Malini, and he said that even our father is not with us, he will take care of us and he want us to go with him because he heard from a friend that is a policeman, a Jewish policeman that this...this is the..the morning that they will take out all the Jews from Vilno Ghetto. I just wanted to point out that the Vilno Ghetto had not only just from Vilno. There were...there were people from all over because in 1942, all the small ghettos around Vilno were liquidated. Means that the Jews were taken out and a lot of people escaped and settled down, so there was...was a big conglomeration of people in the Vilno...in the Vilno ghetto. But this...uh...the morning when...when the liquidation came, there was a just such a eerie feeling in the air. You could smell death. You could smell despair. You could smell helplessness. We were sitting in this room and between me and my sister and my aunt, we just had one little head of green cabbage. This were our provisions. And the man said that if we will survive that he will take us out and we will go someplace you know...uh...to...to some peasants to look shelter, even the Lithuanian were very anti-Semitic. And then all of a sudden, there was this banging in the big door. The big piece of furniture, the commode, was pushed away and Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Polish, and a few Gestapo ran to the room and told us all, "Go out. Go out." And the Russian, the actual the Ukrainian were yelling, "Give us your...uh...give us your watches. Give us your jewelry." And in Russian, the watch...the watch is \_\_\_\_\_. So they were screaming, "Give us your \_\_\_\_\_." And they were pushing us on the street. There is nothing we could do. On the streets were pandemonium. The few...the families started to be separated. The men were put in one column. The...the women were put in another column. The children were...were separated from their parents and there was such a intimidation that you just...you were...you were just had to look down. You couldn't even look up like a person after. Of course, all of us had those...had those bands and very slowly, we started to move out from the ghetto. I was walking my...with...my...my aunt was in the middle. My father wasn't with...not with us. I was...my aunt was in the middle and my sister was from one side and I was from the other side. As we were passing through the gates of ghetto, we turned around and this was the last time that I saw my town. And this was the last time that I...that I actually...this was the last time that I actually saw the streets and of my childhood, so this was the end of my childhood. From this time, I became an adult. As we were passing the...the gates, my aunt had a beautiful voice. And I don't know...she walked like in a trance. And all of a sudden she started to sing this not loud, but sing, and we heard...what she was singing this song Vilno. It...I remembered always her singing us lullabies and all those happy songs. She sang in Russian, in Polish, but she was just going there and the fist was coming down and she was singing the song of Vilno. You want me to read it for you?

It...it was written...it was written in Vilno ghetto. And it...the music is by \_\_\_\_\_ and it goes like this.

You want me to translate it? It says, Dear Le Vilno. Our town that we are born. Our...our dreams and our desires all went...only have and say your name. When they only have your name on our lips, we...we have to cry. We remember the...the Vilno streets, the

Vilno...uh...uh...rivers. The River was Vilier. The Vilno forests and the Vil...and the Vilno...uh...Mountains. And we are...we are dreaming about you and we are thinking about you and we cannot forget the old times.

And as we were walking, we...kept the \_\_\_\_\_ very tight and we actually didn't know where we walked. And then after walking for a long time, we came to that \_\_\_\_\_ Cemetery. The first thing that we saw when we came to the \_\_\_\_\_ Cemetery, by the gate there were three young bodies hanging. There was a young girl and two boys. We found out there were members of the Vilno Resistance that would hang there. It was a windy day and the body was just...just going back and forth in the wind. It was such a eerie, eerie feeling and I...I...I could smell the death. I could smell...I...I could smell all them...the sorrow of the world. And we were...the...the col...after the passage, the columns stopped and they were just a column of women and we heard rumors that there will be a selection. And the selection to the right to live, and selection to the left to die. To the right, just young able bodies; and to the left are women with children, sick people and old people. My Aunt Sonia was only in her early 40s, but she looked very old and my little sister was then just 11 years old, but she looked much, much young, so my Aunt took off her shoes from...that had a little heel and she put them on my sister. She should look a little bit...uh...taller, and she kind of took her brow and put it in...she should look, she should look grownup. And I...I saw people there wondering around in a daze. It...it was...there was a child there crying and one of their sisters was holding her by the hand and he says he was looking for his mother. There were women just tearing their hair out, sitting right there. And the column started to move. Then it came to a stop. And we saw SS men dressed in the...in the black uniforms, with that hat. They had the special hat with the...with the insig...insignia. The insignia was like...uh...a school, a...a cross, with those red swastikas, with those big barking dogs. Those dogs were barking so loud and they were such a big police dogs. I...I see them before me. They are like grey and black, and they are alarming and they were...and the...the Germans, the Gestapo, they were armed. They were armed with real rifles. And then the selection begun. They were...they were just pushing people left and right. And all of sudden...I don't know how it happened...I find myself, my sister on the right, and my aunt was not with us. So I ran back to the assistant and I spoke with this SS man very good German. I started to plead with him. I want to go to my mother. So he took out the other side of the carbine, you know, of the rifle and he beat on me and he pushed me away to the right. I fell on the floor and he was yelling, "You go and you have to work for the fatherland." \_\_\_\_\_ I was devastated. I...I did...I couldn't imagine that we were separated from my aunt. And all of a sudden I found my other aunt...my other Aunt Esther that was my mother's sister. She some...she was even old...older...uh...older than my aunt, but somehow they...she went through and she was there, right there...with my cousin. Her name was Lena. And also with her daughter-in-law. Her name was Malisha. She was from Lodz. And she embraced me and she took me in and they started to calm me down. I...I was really hysterical, beside myself, and somehow very soon after this, they ...they started to load us into the cattle trains. And on this...those cattle trains were we...when we were loaded we were pushed...we didn't even have a place where to sit down. There were a very big vat, you know, beer... with water and some disinfectant in the center. And we just had to stay around there because we couldn't even squat. The...this...in the center was supposed toilet, but



the...we didn't have water. We didn't have bread. We didn't have anything. And I really I was so desperate and so beside myself I don't recall now how long were we...we traveled. But all of a sudden, we heard the wagons stopped. The whole time they didn't let us out. We...we stopped and we were some kind of a railroad station. It was dark at night. It was full of SS men, the same dress, the same dogs, and there were all kinds of guards. And they were very...a lot of lights, reflectors. You know what is a reflector? That was just shining at us and we were pushed and we told to unload. And I realized with my sister and my cousin that we were in a concentration camp. And it was the Kalstra concentration camp near Riga. And I don't know if it was imagination, but I smelled some burning. And in my imagination we were...I mean not my imagination...my mind, I felt that we are taking to the crematoria. I don't know from where, women guards appeared. This woman guards were really something. They were very strong women, blonde, barrel chested and with long boots and all of them had to...what you had to the horses, how you call it?

Q: Whips.

A: Whips. All of them were whips. And they told us right away to line up and to get undressed. Naked! You know, one, you are only a person as soon...as long as you have your clothes on. You can be a professor. You can be a doctor. You can be a scientist. You can be a shoemaker. But as long...as soon as your clothes come up and you stand naked, you are lost. You are not a humanbeing anymore. This is what I cannot...what I cannot forgive the Germans that they...they took off our...systematically take...took away our dignity. But undressing us, many of the girls were young girls. They were virgins. They never saw their parents naked, never saw their mothers naked, but all of a sudden we...we have to go and get undressed. We were taken to...to the...to someplace. They said that they are taking out us to bath, to a general bath, a general bath. I remember holding my little sister by the hand and we were sharing a shower and I was saying goodbye to her because I was sure that the gas will come out any moment. And I...it was talking to her to sooth her out because she was very afraid, and I was telling her, "Don't worry. Mama...Mama is looking for us from Heaven." And we were standing there. I was just like saying goodbye and then all of sudden, the water appeared. And then we realized that we are not in the crematorium, but we are just...they are rooms where we washed. And then you know who went to a series examination with the doctors. The doctors were so brutal. They were so...they were...they were so sadistic, and half were...and undressed and all the...we found ourselves outside that we had to line up. Line up again and there were all kinds of big piles of...of clothing and big pile of shoe and big...so we had to go and choose our dresses or our shoes and...and they told us to get dressed and we were taken to barracks. I was in a way lucky because I didn't think I'll survive too long. There were some of my friends were taken to work in...they called it the \_\_\_\_\_. This is where they were sorting out the...the dresses I think, but I was taken to dinner worker. A German came, a few German and they were selecting women and me and my sister were selected. And they take...took us to the labor camp. It was Dinnerwork. We were unloaded. I think it was on trucks. And we were taking to Dinnerwork. Dinnerwork, it was a labor camp ran by the Toad organization. This was a construction organization and all the guards there were middle aged Germans that were not taken to the Russian, were not

taken to the army. In Dinnerwork, there was a big mixture all kind of people that were worked there as slaves. This was slave...slave labor. We met...uh...POWs from Holland that were very nice. They were young boys that helped us a lot. And we were taken to some barracks and as strange as it will sound to you, after the ghetto and in car survived, we found ourselves quite comfortable in Dinnerworker because first of all, we had water. Each of us had a bed to sleep, and we also...the...the Russians were much, much better and we kind of straighten out ourselves because all...from the young girls became little old women. In the...in Dinnerworker I was in room number 4. There were maybe 40, 50 women in one room. And they were....and we were separated by a very heavy door from the men. The commandant from the...from the whole camp was a German ober...we called him oberstrumfuhrer. And he was...he was a married German. Very tall, and with children, very tall and cute. I remember him walking with...with tall...tall boots and we were lucky. He became very friendly with one of the German...with our inmate, a Jewish girl. She was a Jewish girl from Berlin, and she was a cabaret singer. She was a real beauty. You couldn't find where her legs start and finish. She was all legs. She spoke half and half German. And he fell in love with her. He took her out from the room. She was in my room, and he gave her a separate room and he gave her special clothes. She...she was wearing high boots and like the...the uniforms...the coats when you wear when you ride, a riding habit. And she kind of...kind of had a very good influence on him. He was playing with fire because if a German was not supposed to socialize with a Jewish girl, but this was a closed compound and he was in charge...in charge there, and he adjusted his life for it. But if there was any time any problems, we could always support her and she was trying to sooth it. And she was excellent...excellent barrier for us, between us and him. He became much more mellow. It wasn't...it was not a paradise. Every morning at dawn, it was still dark, it was bells so we had to get up and we had to...we had to line up. It was called the appell, in German the appell. I didn't mention that every day that we were in Kalsea, we had to go to the appell also. And every day we were counted. There was no possibility for us to escape, but every day we were counted like sheep. Anyhow, there was...uh...uh...we... we...we would get up in the morning and we would work. We worked very hard in Dinnerworker. We were working on constructions and we were...we were pushing very, very heavy wagons with sand. We were...uh...passing....we had to line up and work with...uh...those...how you call those...but you build...uh...build a house...uh...I'm a little nervous. I forgot. You know how you call it? When you build a house, the \_\_\_ pieces, how you call it? Uh...Anyhow, we worked with constructions and when...by the end of the day we were exhausted. But the truth, by the end of the day when we came we had to place there to ourselves. And we...we...we had a place where to sleep. We had a special, distinct clothing. We had pants and a jacket and on...on the front and on the back of the clothing, there were white, wide rings and on the sides of the pants, there were white...white stripes. So it was a precaution we shouldn't escape, because there were some workers that used to come, \_\_\_ used to come there and they used to go out. And my sister was told to...to work for the Gestapo commander...uh... that was in charge of the gate and she had to go there every morning and clean his house and also do his laundry. And after a...a...awhile, she got very sick. She developed rheumatism, but it was a very special rheumatism that affects your heart, and..

Q: Rheumatic fever?

A: Rheumatic fever. And she was...and she was kept in...in a small place. It was a...like if you had a coat or whatever, you could stay there a day or two. But if you stayed 3 days, you were taken out and this was goodbye. Shot! When she was taken there in charge of this...this was called in Germany \_\_\_\_\_ Revere. This...you know, it was a German doctor that had a daughter the same age and she looked like my sister. The German doctor kind of felt sorry for her, and he used to steal medicine from the SS man. He used to give her the medicine and he let her stay there. She was for there may 3, 4 weeks, which was very...was just unusual. This is just a human interest story that I am telling you. And he was just taking care of her. And he...he told her that she reminded him of his little daughter. Now, there was...there was a cultural life in Dinnerwork. A very good friend of mine that working as...as a shoemaker from all the things they were told. He was a shoemaker and was fixing German boots. At night, he used to write poetry, and she used to...we used to recite the poetry. And even she wrote a song. The song...the song is called Dinnerworker. Do you want me to...to sing it? The words are...are by...by my friend.

Q: What is her name?

A: Her...her name was Tosha. She didn't survive. She was just a little girl, but she was a real, real poet. For her to write a poem was just nothing. It was just bubbling out of her. She would...wherever she was, she was going with scraps of paper and she was...she was just writing. She was from Lodz, and she and her parents and sister escaped in 19...in 1940 from Lodz and they escaped. There were a lot of people...Polish Jews that escaped from Vilno...to Vilno. Some the Germans. We called them the \_\_\_\_\_, because they were running away from the Germans and because the German came up and to us 3 years later in 41, a lot of them started a new life in Vilno. When, unfortunately, when the ghetto was organized, she...she came to the ghetto and she was together with us. And the...the melody is from a Russian song. And this is...this is a really...this is a really beautiful song that tells a lot about the conditions in Dinnerworker. But goes on and on, but I wanta just tell you, it tells...uh...it tells us that in Dinnerworker, were an island surrounded by waters and forests and there are Jews from all the world that work very hard and are constantly freezing in the cold weather. In the morning, it is still dark, but the bell rings and we have to go out, stand up and go to work. And we are asking the world why are the Jews punished? For...for what things? For whose things are Jews being punished? We used to...we used to sing this all the song that goes on and on, and there were...there is also another poem about the dress...the dress that we wear...wear, we were wearing. In each and every poem, there is also a poem that describes...this is called advertising and it describes how the young girls work very hard to earn their meager portion of...of the bread and water that they are getting. And they are...the only thing that they hope that one day will come that they will walk with themselves in their own land. So they are very poignant and very...very sad, revealing poems. Also there is a poem called The Spring, where a young girls were sitting and waiting for the Spring to come. Spring is such a nice...nice month, but not for us because our freedom is taken away. We don't lose our hope that one day we will be free, but in the meantime, we feel that the

whole world around us forgot us. I just wanted...to people to know that those people, those girls, those young women that were there were living and breathing one thing. Freedom and survival. Their spirit was so strong. Their bodies were very weak. But there was something in them that just didn't let them die. I have to tell you now about something that happened in Dinnerworker which is really remarkable. We had guards all over. One of the guards was a younger German, and each and every room had...had a Jewish woman that was in charge. And in one of the rooms...this was room number 3...was...in charge was a Mrs. Schwartz. She was little older than us because she was married at this time already. She was not a beauty, but a very clever woman. And somehow, I don't know how, this young German guard fell in love. And every night, they used to talk for hours and hours. And we couldn't understand this what he saw in her, but this was...and he used to bring her special food. She was very good. She used to share it with other girls. Yes. And one day came and there were trucks standing in front of our...the building that we were kept, and they said they...they need women to...uh...labor camp. It was called \_\_\_\_, and they working something with electric...electricity...electric lamps, something. And between those that were taken was also Mrs. Schwartz. Mrs...of course, this guard was beside himself, and he went right with there, with her. Not officially, but he went as a guard with them. When...we were told. I wasn't...I didn't see it, but I was told that when they came there, there was a selection and since Mrs. Schwartz was a little older, she was taken in a truck and this man...this guard knew that she was taken to be shot. When he saw her being taken away, he shot himself. So this was one the remarkable story. We stayed in Dinnerworker til one day...one day I think it was already in 1944, they told...they all loaded us into a big boat, and they took us across the Baltic Sea. It was near Danzig, in East Russia, and when we came to a place, this was some kind of a port. After a voyage of 3 or 4 days on the big boat, on the big...uh..boat, we were taken with barges to a different concentration camp. The concentration camp was Tutorial. It was in 1944. When we were...to describe Stutthof, it take...it can take a week. I tried to be very...if...if there is a misery there was Stutt...there was Stuffhof. The barracks were terrible. The food in the morning they used to give us a slice of black bread and a little bit hot water, black. Since we didn't have water to wash our head, we used this...this water to wash our hair. Uh...During they day they used...they used to bring a very big pot, tremendous pot like the pot sometimes you used the pet. You used the pet and to wash to do their wash them in the...and it was full with black water, many times cold with turnips half cooked. And they...this was our...this was what they will give us to eat, and after they finished the...the women guards would finish to distribute this meager rations. Since we were so hungry, we used to crawl with the head to...to scrap some food on the bottom, and the German used to stand and laugh. We were surrounded with...uh...electric wire and with so many men and women just fall on the electric wires. I saw it. They committed suicide. Men they separated from you. We saw there Hungarian women. We saw there that were brought because it was already 44, we saw the...we saw the...we saw all kinds of nationalities...Jewish nationalities. And those German guards were so bad, so sadistic, so cruel that I just don't have the words to describe. One day they called us out...they put us...it was cold...in appell. We had to stand up, and they said that young women will be taken to a labor camp. My sister then was...was in big danger, and when she passed near the German, he asked her...I told her to stand with herself out and show that she had a big bust, and I put some...something into her breast. And

"How old you are?" And she said, "I am 18." Uh...He...he...she went through, but it was such a traumatic experience for me that I cannot...because my mind already said goodbye to her. And also the first time in Stutthof, I saw those stripes because those striped uniform and we very anxious to get them because we were very cold. We didn't...we had very thin dresses. We didn't have shoes. My legs were frostbitten, and those uniforms were kind...but they...they didn't give us at this time. And really at the strangest sound they would help us to fight the cold. Very shortly, after we left Stutthof, a big epidemic of typhus broke out there. My aunt and my cousin died right there in the epidemic. My cousin-in-law survived this...this epidemic, and I met her after the libera...liberation, but just the moment when I was separated from my aunt from there, it was a...took so much of the spirits because they...my...my...they didn't want to go because my aunt...then she was in her 40s looked older. They knew that she will not accept it, and she didn't go. Finally, we were brought to Stuttgart labor camp. Oh, it was...Stutthof labor camp was a camp...a camp that we really worked very, very hard because facilities were miserable. We didn't have the proper clothing. We were really freezing, and we worked very hard. We were working in the forest. And we also were building trenches. And every day, every day there were girls just dying. They were falling like flies. Any...any little infraction, they were beaten. They get like 20 lashes, 25 lashes and...on their behind, and since they were so malnourished, those slashes just were full of pus. They never healed and those girls never, never recovered. We was at a place called \_\_\_\_\_ Revere. And it...and a Hungarian woman doctor was in charge with there. She was helping whatever she could, but there was so little that she could do. Every day when we came from work, I was going to her and I developed very big...very big sores on my legs, very bad circulation, and she would help me. Because if they would...the German would see myself, they will shot me. And I was...I am soever grateful with her, and by coincidence, I met her after the liberation and she was very instrumental to my survival. I will tell you about this later. After we'd stayed in...in Stuttgart a long time, one day was the day that I will never forget it. It was a day before the Yom Kippur. I was not from a relig...religious family, and I am not...was really not observant, but there were a lot of women that were very observant. And they kind of knew when...I don't know how because we had no...no papers, no picture. We had nothing. No identification. And right there next...next bed to us was a woman that was...was an aunt of a friend of mine, and she was a patient of my mother. She was from...she was one of those people that my mother helped, that she was not of the wealthy ones. And she...when she saw us in Stuttgart, in the labor camp, she kind of took care of us because she was very lucky. She worked...worked in the kitchen. And whatever scraps she was bring...she was bring at night. She would be shot if they would find her because if a girl went out from the line and she picked up a frozen turnip, that was...that was sent to \_\_\_\_\_. She was shot right there. But she shot and my friend as we were walking in the dark because it was in end of September. It was already very dark in the morning, maybe 4, 5 o'clock in the morning, she told us...my aunt told me that you are invited. You will fast tomorrow, and tonight you are invited. She's preparing a little celebration, something to eat. So we were very...we were very excited because you know what this food, a piece of bread, black bread, this... And as we working, a rumor spread...the women that were religious, told our guard that they would like to finish work a little earlier because tomorrow is the day of atonement. It's a very big day. And do you know that the

guards kept us this night longer than usual. They were harsher to us. They gave us more lashes and when we came home we were so tired that we couldn't even eat. We were just over exhausted. We were just happy that you could lie down and stretch out. I didn't go to the \_\_\_\_\_. I didn't do nothing. The next day in Kippur, we went to work with nothing. I was just telling you how people treated people, and I don't want this to be forgotten, what the humanbeing can do to a humanbeing. Very soon after this, a rumor started to spread that the Germans are in retreat, and a very big thing developed right there in Stuttgart between those guards. Those guards were real SS men with those black things. And they took us out and they took...and they took us on...I...we call it the death march. They were taking us one side to another and sometimes, we were taken from one direction and we saw other people, prisoners, concentration camp, Polish people, Jews, taken from the other side. At...we used to walk endless, endless times, and we didn't have shoes. We...we matter of fact had those wooden shoes that...that really were...were...you couldn't walk on the snow with it, because the snow was just going there and you used to walk like a circus performer, and used to form. And at night, they used to put us in a big barn without food. They used to occupy a big barn of a Polish peasant, a German peasant. It does...wasn't a act in East Prussia. In the morning we had to...to straighten ourselves, put ourselves in a column. They will count us. And we will go forwards. And one day when we came to a...to a place, one of these guards got bezerk. He put us straight in a column and he just started to shoot discriminately. A woman that was standing near me...she was standing here; I was standing here. My sister was shot. I lost my sister. And I didn't know what happened. After they...he...he was subdued, there were a lot of bodies just lying around, and I was besides myself looking for my sister, and after awhile, we found ourselves. She...she escaped, and I...she was running and I was running, and we found ourselves and we started to smell death. We were really smelled death. And this march...they called the death march, was something undescrivable because we were walking and sleeping. The last night we walked the whole day and the whole night and we closed our eyes and we were sleeping. The night before we were put in a big barrack, and I practically gave up. Because I was so exhausted and was so tired that I told my sister that...there was a lot of hay. We were sitting in the hay, that we were go into the hay and wait...and wait for them that the Germans should come, they should walk away, and we will just die very peaceful lying in the hay. But when they came out and they counted, they realized that a few women were missing, so the Polish peasant came with a German and he looked in the barn, and they were poking and as they poked...they poked and they found us. And I was begging the German guard, the SS man, to shot me because I couldn't go. And he pushed me and he says to me, "You are too young to die and...and straighten yourself out," and pushed me to the column. This...this...I was there. And I am telling you and this...this I memory stick out, written in my soul even after so many years. We started to walk, and we were a group of young girls that were very close..close together. We...we actually supported ourselves. The girl that wrote the poem and my little friend, the girl that her mother...her aunt was the cook, we kind...we...we had like a kind of coalition, and we knew the only way we can survive if we will stay in the front. Because if you were staying in the back and you couldn't walk with the column, you were just shot. And then I saw young girls walk and walk and all of a sudden they became like frozen. Straighten their legs, and sit and they were just like frozen monuments, falling right with their face on the

snow. The German didn't have to shot them. This is how they fell. One of my friends started to feel bad, and we took her and I was from one side and another of my friend and we were dragging her, practically dragging her. She couldn't help. Legs were frozen. So the guard noticed it. He...he...he told the column to stop. He took her to a certain field, and we heard the shot. He shot her right there. (Crying) And then he send out another girl. She should take off...she had a little coat...a little warm coat on her which was very unusual. She should take it off and take it to herself. So this girl, she didn't know her, but the will was survival was so strong, she took it...her off, and she put it and she couldn't stand it. But she didn't know. She wanted to survive. What can you do? Many times in the night when I...I get up...I wake myself up screaming and I see those young girls, frozen, falling on the snow. This is something undescrivable. The...here on the cheeks, they were red, and they were just sticks. This is something that whoever wasn't there cannot believe it. And when I talk to you I think I'm telling you something that happened to somebody else because I cannot believe that I went through it and then lived to tell. It was March 11, 1945. We came to a place called Kruma. It was East Prussia. It was a small town. As we walked in there, there was a tremendous barn. I never saw anything like it, and all of us were put into this barn. In this barn, we met people from all the nationalities. There were men also. And...and the barn was surrounded by Gestapo, and as we were looking through the doors and actually the doors were a little open...there were no windows, we saw the Gestapo putting out little...twigs, around the barn. They wanted to burn. It was decided that they didn't know what to do with us anymore, and they wanted to hold up...there were thousands of people there. All kinds of languages that spoke...spoken. And we were just sitting there, and all of a sudden, it was in the morning, March 11, 1945, that we heard a big commotion, and somebody started to scream, "The Russian are coming." And we didn't find one German. I don't know. They disappeared. The German guard disappeared. I was afraid to run out. I was sitting. And then...my friends started to scream and yell, "The Russians are coming." And we saw the Russian soldiers. They occupied the city...this little town, and one of the Russian soldiers took a rifle and shot a...a German guard, took off his shoes and gave me his boots because the Germans had said if they were very well dressed, and without hesitation. I didn't think twice. I took this...otherwise, I would never survive because I didn't have shoes to walk. You know...we arrived in this little town, there was a dairy factory and they were making there cheese and cream and people were very hungry. They used...they ran to the factory, and they were drinking the...the cream and the right there they were vomiting because the stomach...and...and typhoid epidemic started to spread. I was infected with typhus then already. I didn't know about it. And there was...there was a very big house. It was like a castle. It belonged to some kind of a Nazi, and the Russian to...to go there and to just to find a place. They didn't know what to do with us. So we were lying there on the floor, and people were dying like flies. You...you could see...you could just step over dead bodies. And in this big commotion,...oh, I met this Hungarian doctor that I was telling you about. This Hungarian doctor that was in Stutthof, \_\_\_\_\_, survived. And she...she put...she was...she put herself a Red Cross then, and she was collecting those few girls that she knew and I was...my sister was there, and I had a few friends and she said that there is a very good danger because the Russian soldiers are raping the Jewish girls. And she said we have to take a horse and buggy and I have to take you. I heard that if...I don't know how many miles...10 miles, 20

miles from here, there is a Russian hospital and they will accept you there.

Q: We have one minute. Can you tell us just very briefly where you were taken?

A: We were...on our...we were traveling with this...with this buggy, and the Russian...the Russian took us on our horse, so we were actually walking and we stopped in a house. The house...I don't know how many miles it was, but it was close...but it was close to the hospital, and we just couldn't walk anymore. So I spoke a very good Russian, and we went into this house and I asked the Russian soldiers if we could sleep over. They said, "Yes." They gave us permission to sleep, but in the middle of the night, they came to this house and it was a big tragedy. A few girls were raped right there. I...I escaped with my sister because a soldier came to my bed, and I was separated. And I started to scream and yell in Russian. And I was begging in his mother's name he shouldn't touch me and my sister I put under the bed. So he didn't know, but I was. And the doctor ran out and...and she ran up, and she ran to the officer that was in charge and brought him over to my bed and I explained to him that we all infected with typhus and we would spread the typhus to the soldiers, they should leave us alone. So the...the officer in charge, there was nothing he could do with those girls that were there already. He told the soldiers to come out and he put a guard and this left overnight. And next morning, we were taken to the Russian hospital where I stood and there I was 9th of May. 9th of May 45, when it was end of the war, I was there. I was sick a whole year. And in the Russian hospital, I was 99 percent near dead because I had typhoid, I had \_\_\_\_\_, and I developed T.B. The misery that I saw there between the Jewish girl...some that were infected with the.....