

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Fanni Birnberg Ross
June 27, 1991
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Fani Birnberg Ross, conducted by Linda Kuzmack on June 27, 1991 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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FANI BIRNBERG ROSS
June 27, 1991

Q: Could you begin by telling us your name?

A: My name is Fani Birnberg, born 1-10-1922, first October 1922.

Q: And where were you born?

A: In Gwozdziec.

Q: And where is that near?

A: Near and Stanislawow (ph). And not far from

Q: Wait...wait. OK. Fani, we're going to start again, and we're...I'd like you to mention your full name with your married name, with the Ross...OK. Please tell us your full name.

A: My full name is Fani Birnberg Ross.

Q: And when were you born and where were you born?

A: 1922 in Gwozdziec, near , and not far from .

Q: And tell us a little bit about your family life before the war.

A: We were a family of farmers. The whole street was a family, living...grandfather and the cousins all together in one place, and my father had two girls. My father was Josef and my mother's name was Frieda, born Greenberg. And uh he was a farmer and a businessman. I went to the public school. After the public school I went to the Hebrew school. The public school were from nine till three and the rest I went to Hebrew school. I came home every time five o'clock home, and uh it was a happy life. I belonged to . I went on trips and trips and uh I had a good life. 1939 the Russian came in, end of 1939. In the beginning they start to taking the young girls to work, with the bosses to work digging ditches. So I went two days. Three days I came home. I washed myself up and my mother said oh my poor hands. You better go stop this digging and go to school again, so I left Gwozdziec and I went to . It was ten hours from Gwozdziec via the train. I went to . I was lucky. I had...in I had my uncle and aunt from Germany, and they settled down on 10 in . The next day I went to the school, , went to the office and had my examination, and there right away I had very good...my exam was very good from everything...geography, literature, history, everything, and uh the director from the school said you are hired to be in school and you will get . You will get room and board...doesn't cost you nothing. And every month I got fifty rubles. Weekends I went to my uncle and aunt to learn how to set the tables and how to clean. And I...I was a happy life too. I was very happy. Went to the movies and I went...I studied hard and I didn't

knew Russia, so they gave me papers, newspapers to read, and I read newspapers and this when I learned Russian, and uh it was a...the professor told my mother it's a big and I will be . I would come home and learn the farmers how to...teach the farmers how to put the seeds in the ground, which seeds and what time. So when the...when all...then the German came, end of '40, 1940-41 the German came, 1941. The German came, though I still went to school. It was a couple weeks...later on, the school was closed. I went back to my aunt and uncle. They had only one daughter too, and I was having a good time too, with another beginning what the what the German will do. And one night the the German came in, the SS and said tomorrow I want you to go to work, and we didn't know ...all the girls go to work on the street, so we said the next day I uh...that was and went to work. A truck came and picked us up, all the street, from the lumber camp, from in . I went and they took us to the to the Wehrmacht where the Russians left. It was dirty everything and ...wash it out, wash it. I didn't wash it. I was looking. The captain came in. He said he lf ? lost a button. He's looking for a button. I said I can find you a button, so I went from door to door to look for a button...from office to office...where is the button, till four o'clock and I came...the parlor was clean already. So four o'clock uh five...later on, an hour I came to the window and five o'clock they took me back home. Took me back home to my aunt and uncle's house, said I wasn't going to camp. And I was working for six seven weeks. And I was thinking well maybe I'll go home. And was no trains then. Then one day I was listening to the radio and somebody tell on the radio that the bus is going, so I took a bus. I could go to Russia too with the soldiers, but I didn't want it. I want to go to my parents. I took a bus...maybe ten...eight to ten hours and I went home. I came home. Was not Ghetto. No, the Ghetto wasn't but the German was in already. Were the Jewish already and they was talking about the Ghetto. We didn't know what Ghetto means. And we lived between Christian people...it was all together before. I had Christian friends. I had Christian students. We went together and uh everything was normal. My father paid the taxes and uh he buy a piece of land and worked very hard. I didn't know what happened. Then he stopped working. But the Russians...you couldn't work either, and he was uh a rich man by the Russians so he can work. so...

Q: And you took the bus back to your home town?

A: Back to my home town. But but the Russia lie too, and so I...my father was a wood cutter, not a farmer, so anyway I went home. I went home. I came home. Oh my mother was crying, kissing me. They said she don't understand why I came home. It's all old people. All the young people are running away, to Russia. Some of them went to Romania. They want to, you know, save themselves, but I said well, I came home. I was home about two, three weeks. Happy go-lucky. I put my uh hair in the curls. I was like a really teenager. Was very happy home. I knew all the people so we all...we were thinking that the Germans would be the same as Russia. They will let us work and do, you know, do...let us live, so what's happen when the Germans...one day they came to the community center and said we do...everybody go to the Ghetto. All the people. All the Jewish people and register to the Ghetto. We were lucky. Our house was standing in the Ghetto, so we didn't have to move, so all our family who lived scattered around the town, moved into our house. There was eighteen people in that bungalow of three rooms and one kitchen. No...the room was two,

three and two. In Europe, you know, when you have two children, three rooms had one daughter and three of the other daughters, so later on they all leave. My father's two children marry and all together. This was his plan. Well, the Ghetto opened up...further they they put wooden...with wood they hammer the windows in the front. We couldn't go in the front. Only in the back. School was out. Shopping in the store were from...were from ten to twelve, only shopping, what we needed and we were lucky. My mother had...we had, you know, corn and beet and potatoes, everything at home, so later on I...one day I was cleaning. It was my time to clean. Then every week somebody else cleaned, and this were my week to clean. I was cleaning and then I hear some shots outside. I didn't know what. We came out. It was day time. They kill hundred and fifty people. Who was on the street they killed. Who was running...who was...they all killed. How many It was May the 3rd. I remember very much. So the next day everybody must help to clear out the dead, on the street. But my father and my, you know, the cousins, the men...in the house was nine men...and all of them uh picked them up in the streets. In the Jewish religion when you don't uh die of natural causes, you are not buried in the cemetery. You are buried in the in the side of the cemetery, so they make a big hole, a very big hole. There was a hundred and fifty people together in that hole. We went home. It was terrible. The night was beautiful, and I said God, where are you? I was thinking and looking up...I said oh God. What nice living could be. Why aren't. I couldn't understand why...why. We did nothing wrong. We went our way. We were good citizens. We don't know why. Anyway, then was talking there will be aktion again because they were afraid, the people. The the men, the nine men start to dig a hole in the uh...not in the living room...in the bedroom, a hole. A big hole under the bed, so we can go in hiding under the bed. They finished the hole. Later on we saw our uh wood was...the the floor was the rest painted, so the paint came out and we was afraid maybe the German would see. Ah... the Juden. the Jew. Then they decided they will go in the store where the chicken koop, under the chicken koop. They open a big hole and they put the chicken, you know, on the big hole. They they cover up the hole with straw, nothing else, and they figure out. It was two o'clock at night they did this. Two o'clock. They carried the the the, you know, the sand and the the dirt all on the back yard, and they were for nothing. And we'll cover our back in the bedroom and we went again in the stall. In the stall we went...it was on a Tuesday...I remember very well...all of a sudden they say the German are here. The German are here. And we didn't know what's happen. We right away went. The front door opened. My father was. The front door opened and the back door opened, so the Germans would know we are not here. We run away. So we spent from nine o'clock till five o'clock in the in the dark and one neighbor's daughter came. It was too late to take them in and she was...didn't...couldn't go into hiding. It was too late. We closed the the the hiding place, so she got killed from the from the from the Germans. It was under...in the house...she got... she was hiding in the door. She was thirty years old. They kill her on the spot. So five o'clock we go out. I was crying, Mother, I lost my bracelet. I lost my bracelet. She said oh my child, my child. You'll have lots of bracelets in your life. And she said to me, I remember, you know, Fani, remember, she said, that you lived. Tell all the people what we went through. Tell everything. So we came out from the from the hiding place. Oh gosh...no drapes, no dishes to cook. Nothing. Everything was taken. The neighbors came in, the Christian neighbors came in, took everything. Our whole world...there's nothing. But, you know, life must go on. Was on a Saturday, Wednesday,

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, again vandalizing and again the Sabbath keeping and again the religious...they stick their religion to death. So the ten days passed again, after the aktion. It was . It was night. And uh the after this we went to the store and we bought something from them, you know, and...you know, no schooling, nothing. We couldn't do nothing. So after the the the aktion, 5 the hiding place, we came out. Was rumors again. Was no papers. No radio. We didn't know about nothing, but rumors again say we must...somebody told we must leave in ten minutes our houses. We will go to the bigger ghetto in Kolmyja (ph). But it was a rumor. We didn't believe it. , you know. I didn't believe it. Maybe God will give us who stay here and we go through the war, maybe...maybe. So one Friday night, we're sitting at the table. Rumor...the Gestapo is here. So again the round hiding place, not in the same place. My uncle next door had a ice factory, like an ice...he delivered ice to the people...ice cream or something. And we went in the ice cellar, in the cellar, and we stay in the cellar all night. The SS running around looking for people. They was a child two years old, and nobody knew...the child was dead. They took him out. The people got scared. He start to cry, so they held his mouth and the child passed away. We came out again, ...Sabbath couldn't do Friday night. So we came in. The candle was, you know, lighting. It's again nice in the house...clean and wash it up everything. Sitting, dressing up, dress up in all cities. Did it again. Praying to God. The next is Sunday. We uh it was a funeral for the baby. It it was my my sister's... uh my mother's sister's young son. And the next was again was all...when we came and sitting and sitting and I say and I hear my friend from school, to all around . , run away. I said...and everybody sitting and I and I came in and I said Mother, you know when you give me five hundred ... dollars, I can go with them too. I said...she said what. Friday night. It's a Saturday. It is their money. Who takes money, and she slapped me in the face, and I said OK, and I went in the, you know, in the side room and I was crying. Why...why should this...you know, I was embarrassed. A girl of sixteen, seventeen years old (laughing) and I got, you know, slap on the face. The next day I hear the girls that went to Romania all got caught and got from the from the SS. I don't know that my mother or something...I don't know... or from God. So the next day again rumor says we will be dis...nobody knows what be tomorrow, nobody. So they took the Jews again, the Jewish people again from the town and they built the bigger Ghetto. So everybody filed...from nine o'clock everybody must be ready. Everybody must be ready. So in ten minutes, what can you take? You take nothing. You leave everything in the house, open the doors everything, and we all leave. I think my mother put some money...I don't know where it in, but she show me where, but I will not go and you know, dig the money...no. And we all went to the Jewish Community Center and all we register ourselves. Then trucks came in to take us to the big ghetto. When I...all of a sudden, I don't know what happened...they ...family Birnberg, family Birnberg. I say...what, my father and mother say. What it is. We'll take you to a farm. Three. Lisa Smeltzer (ph) and Three girls and seven boys. They took us on a big...like here built in Virginia, a big farm, beautiful. Oh, beautiful. He was an English baron and he took over the whole qstate. The wife was thirty years old, very nice girl, so I was...right away I had my room. I got so excited when I see black coffee and I spill it, so I got all burned up and the same day I went to the doctor's and , so one girl was to do the cooking. The boys should go work, help on the farm. I...they picked me up, they choosen me up to uh help in cooking in the kitchen, and of course the baroness to do...to give her tea and to uh help her shopping, to go with her, and one day

the baron's mother came and uh she was cooking and she I tasted everything and I ate at night it was boiled potatoes. I put everything else so the boys could take the potatoes and eat. It was everything...I put them outside. So it was then one day we had a party. The priest came in and we all will make big tables, and the priest, he knew I was Jewish. I was still my Jewish papers. He said you will see the farm, everything will be returned. You will be the winner, and it was one Jewish boy was...he was a CPA. He did the books. And I always used to come in to the office and uh clean up the office room, you know, dust and something. And one man was a Polish man. He was from Warsaw and he was around in the , so one day...it was no bathroom. I didn't have to take a bath, so I and her girlfriend Lisa, we went to the creek and we bathed ourselves. Then the Baron came on a horse, through the the forest. He was looking at us. I didn't know. Well, two days later...was on a Sunday and his wife went to church and his mother-in-law...uh he called me. I didn't know what...I was thinking he wanted the office cleaned, and he gave a proposition. I should be his mistress. He can save my mother and my father and he will try everything to do to save us, and he closed the door, you know, closed the door and say think about it. From nine o'clock, I was lying on the on the couch and thinking till three o'clock. Three o'clock is when the people came home from church...one o'clock. It was lunch time and I was still closed the door. He closed me up to think about it. He came in and he said, what's your uh decision. And I said, you know, I have boy friend. I lied to him. And uh I will go where my people go. Thank you very much. But one day he took me to to my mother in the big ghetto, in , and he brought her flowers and beans and mother was all, you know, thin, real frail, and my father, and she only said, to my child, and she went after me and she said to me, remember who you are. And and I came back with the Baron back, and he said what you talk to your mother. I said oh, she gave me the lesson. That's all, and I went back to the estate. I stayed there two girls and he was he was...what what the baron said to you. I said he didn't say nothing. He just took me to...I didn't tell him what, you know, what is my secret. I didn't tell them everything. But the the bookkeeper told me, Fani, I hope you can be . I didn't know what he means. I don't...but three o'clock...I I couldn't. I was afraid. I was afraid maybe his wife will know one day, or his mother...I don't know...I was afraid to do this. I could saved even my parents. Sometimes I think about it. Why not? was...my feeling, my upbringing . I couldn't do this. I didn't let him touch me even, touch me. Then I said I have a boyfriend, and he right away backed up. He was very...oh...he was looking like Robert Taylor (ph)...not in the mood.

Q: Then what happened?

A: Then, all these girls, all one day all the Jews who lived all must come out again, on the same place, to the same time, go everybody in the same to the ghetto. We were afraid the Germans, but some Jews will live in small towns. Said everybody must go, so I was thinking maybe not to go. I don't know what to do...to go or not to go. So I started to think maybe I can...two or three days later I can prolong it. Maybe, maybe I can find something or maybe hide myself again, so at night came. I came to a to an older lady, and she said, It's night now. If you came in, and you can sleep over. I had a house, but couldn't go into the house. The parents were off in the ghetto, so I'm there, and I was just roaming around thinking maybe I could save myself. But when I was sleeping over...oh it was Easter time. I see people go to

church. Oh, it was so beautiful...it was end of April, and what the sun was shining. Everybody's so nice so when I saw the people I was afraid. I went in a stall and hide myself where the horse, under the horse, you know, where the horse feeds. I hide myself till the people go back home so I can go again, see again, run again. I run again. I was...I was thinking I can go to my house and pick up some pictures, pick up something. I will think if I'll go to the back door...I'll go in the back door. A boy from twelve years had a bat in his hand, a stick. He hit me so fast. His mother would stay in the window and laughing, and he hit me so hard...it was...and I didn't have shoes. I was running barefoot and was . I was running, running good. I couldn't run right away. He didn't succeeded to hit me so much, so I was running. I say it's enough, to me, myself. I go to the to the center, and say take me to the biggest ghetto . You know, I went...I remember a horse and buggy and a man, the policeman, he went on a horse. He said oh, you shouldn't be worried. You are a young girl. You will save yourself. It happened to me the same thing in the war, he said, the 1st World War. You know, the serfs were He was running too. I don't know what he was running. You'll be safe. You will see. I say how can I be safe when I go with you on the big . You'll be safe. You will see. I came to the ghetto. I didn't saw my mother anymore. I didn't saw my father anymore. I was alone again. I went and I had a room, not a room. I sleep over in a in the room, so they next day, they say well, everybody, all the Jews must come and register to go to train, to go work, to work. I was happy to go to work and I will make some money. I didn't realize what work...we didn't have no papers. We didn't know what uh you know, what they will do with us. I came and the big...it it was like a jail. They took everybody, the same day, they took in jail. They took everybody. It was an open jail and a big, big place. All the people are sitting with baggages. And then I see in the corner? I see my friends from college, two girls, and I sit near them. Then a man came in and said I go with you, with all the girls. I go with you . He was only thirteen years old, and I saw my cousin over there, and she said oh, oh, she said, no food she says. I'm glad. I envy your mother what she went through with the vegetables, but she didn't...she's not here, and the next day they...the wagon came. All the wagon like cattle wagons with no window, with no nothing. They count each wagon, seventy people, and which girl looks so blond, they hit in the head with a piece of wood, the SS, and they count. They count everybody...one, two, three, four, everybody in the wagon. We came in the wagon. Oh my goodness. All the wagons...oh, . These go to work. People not work. Then I see in the corner my dentist, the doctor and his wife and the children. The doctor had some tablets, medicine, and he just pass out. The dentist said to me, Fani, I see you have good boots. Can you exchange it? No...but the man will maybe will...I'll give him my boots and he give me...he was a short man and his shoes fit me, so I put on his shoes and he took my boots and in the train and they count out seventy. It was a beautiful day, and I say oh God, And I say will I live? Why, why? I couldn't imagine What would be it I couldn't imagine. The older people in a couple hours, pass out already. No...no...it it was no air. How could they live. They younger people were. Everybody has his turn, to smell a little air. Was night and everybody was and all the time was hitting people and other one would say well I was in the corner with three students, and was one day passed by. We didn't have nothing to to eat. The second day passed by. How long can you, so what we did, had our urine. We drink our ...we drink our urine. Lucky I had...I had a a silk dress and the dress was torn down with the people, you know, the students didn't know what they're doing, and they tore

each...each...they tore down...my slip I was in, so all of a sudden a women says, , I will and I will show you. You keep quiet children. She through the door, to the window, up the window. It was all with iron. The window was with iron. How how could she go through. She couldn't go through. I don't know how she went through, and she went under the under the rail. She couldn't. She didn't do nothing. So one man...next, he said...the third day...I will do it, and he went and opened the doors. Then the one wagon was in the front. Womens' were right in the middle, and he one SS ,am was in the end, and the train I remember was going up the hill a little. Was not far from , and all of a sudden my cousin and I remember jump and the girls and the boys didn't let me go and they...you will not go. Where you will go? I said no, and they was already, you know, they talk with silly things, talking...Third Reich is coming. Where you will go? I think they didn't know what they talking about. They...the men...the next man...show them he says, who can go, go, and my cousin with her boyfriend, took her by the hand and just let her go, come. And I jumped and the cousin with his wife...with his girlfriend...the cousin with his boyfriend...you don't go with us, and three people will be a disaster. You go by yourself. I went right away down the stones and I had my green colored beautiful coat with some letters, some pictures from Germany, from an uncle whom my parents and I left it. You know, I just jumped down and and I lost it. And it . It wasn't . So I came down. I went right away into the sewer, and in the sewer...running water. I washed myself and uh the frogs were jumping on me. (Short Pause) And I was sitting and I didn't know what to do. (Caughing) I don't know what to do...to go someplace, hid under the sewer. Six o'clock I decided to go from the sewer. I went from the sewer out and then a boy and a cow...he was between twelve, thirteen years old. He said I'll know who you are. You're a Jew. I said me, Jew? No. I am a Polish girl, jump from the train. They take us to work. I don't to work for the Germans, and disappear I said. And that's the for it. I didn't have too much conversation with him. I disappear in the forest. I came in the forest. Two small houses. I knocked on one house and I say, can I sleep over night? We don't take in Jews. And next, sister said to me, come in, come in. And she sure took me in. She took me on the attic. She was thinking I'm crazy. I'm something from the from the . All the stop. . My body full with lice, and I went upstairs on the attic, and through the attic this goes through. I kiss the floor. I say where I go,I couldn't. All the time I said to myself, why are...why we picked out. The night is no night. The world is no beautiful. Why us? I stay over there and I see through the sun come and the sun come down in the forest and children running, Mommy, Mommy, and the SS after them, killing all the children in the forest, all the children. Then the man, he was maybe thirty years...he opened the door. Children and the old people die already. Who can, you know, jump, jump. Go. And they all start to run, and what happened. The all the SS after them and I was lying on the on the attic and the farmer's wife bring me soup and uh boiled...baked . I will never forget it. And I start...I couldn't eat. I cried so much...I just couldn't eat, and uh so at night everything was quiet down, was no mare shooting. I didn't hear no more dead people, dead children. I see, look down, you know, through the...through..on the attic. At night her husband comes home with a . My dear child, I cannot keep you here. You must go on. But you can sleep over night. I remember at night she took me down from the from the from the attic. She gave me a bath. She washed me up. Oh she said...I was thinking you were crazy, but you are so beautiful. You are normal. And she put on farm's clothes, a big skirt and a big hat on me and she a big blouse and she said

you have now some you go. Have some eggs, you know, to carry on and you go. Go to Lemberg (ph). You don't go far. You'll go maybe an hour. I came to Lemberg. I went in the same...the apartment house where I was living. I knock on the door and came out. She seen me every week. She says Mrs. Greenberg is not home. She went out with her daughter. We wouldn't need eggs this this week, you know, to the farmer and to me. And she says...and I said to her, you know, I will wait. The farmer's wife left everything with me. She says next week I'll come and pick up my clothes. And she kissed me, said goodbye, and I was sitting there waiting for my aunt. Five thirty I see my...oh honey, Fani, and she start to kiss me. We both cry, you know, and uh the daughter, she asked, you know, where to put the daughter. Was Jewish too, but I...with herself. Right away at night she says Fani, I take you right away to to a gynecologist, right away. I tell her I had only one period a year. I went right away at night. She took me to the gynecologist. He said everything is OK. The reason not to have the periods...I didn't eat and I didn't, you know, drink. I didn't have normal baths and everything, so she will be OK. She shouldn't be afraid. I came home. She said listen, what we will do, I will try to go to the ghetto and buy a birth certificate for you, and we'll see what we can do. I was very, very lucky that she kept me. She , but lots of people came and knock on the door. She says I cannot help you and they were apartment buildings. So she went out and I had uh in the cupboards, and I was sitting where the jelly is and everything was . I start to dance again and being myself again, and taking a bath, and was going on six weeks...after six weeks the neighbors said Mrs. Greenberg, Carl Greenberg. Somebody...when you go out, somebody's stepping on the floor. Somebody's in your apartment. She said what. My apartment. So she says don't worry. Fani, we will see what we'll do. One day she come home. She said Fani, I have a birth certificate for you. Everything in I brought in from in the ghetto from a man, and uh you take the to the and I will call downtown, like , the building...the engineer, with a couple more children. Maybe they'll take you. And they...uh she called up and said yes. Well, I left her place and I went to them, and that was in downtown, not far from the church, not far from the church. A beautiful night, , but there was a in the basement in a nice apartment. And I was lucky to, happy. I'm making tea. I was jumping around again. I was happy. Two, three days later, three SS men...eleven o'clock...they knock on the door and they say we are looking for a blond Communist girl. She will . We would like to pick her up. They went into the couple's apartment, and they're looking. They came in the kitchen and talked to me and I said to them, listen, when she will be here, I'll call you. Right away I bring her in. Don't worry. We don't know...in German, and I spoke the German...you're an honest man. You come see and why you're Make some like tomorrow, you know. I will tell you where she is. She will come on the police. I bring you. He went out. They went out and I got so excited and across the hall, was living German people too, are two German girl. The small one dancing and singing in German like nothing happened to me, myself. I came down to uh the couple downstairs and they said honey, you know, we can't keep you. It was eleven o'clock at night...I cannot keep you. It was a big city. It was Christmas '41, '42. Ah, it was beautiful. The music was playing. Flowers all over. I counted and I said God, please change what I can't. Please change what I can't. Well, eleven o'clock...I sat in the front like . I sat in the front and I'm thinking what to do. First thing I'm thinking to go under the street car, and the second one I'm thinking, well, no. I didn't know what to do. A doctor came in to our door. I was afraid. When they catch me, they will cut me

to pieces. When they caught a Jewish girl with Christian papers, they cut right away and and later they cut her. So this was on my mind and, you know, I knew it, so I was standing eleven o'clock thinking what to do. Three nuns... start start to rain and snow a little...three nuns passing by with an umbrella, and they said my gosh, there's a young girl. What you doing? They were thinking I'm a y prostitute. I said no, sister, no no no. I don't have any to sleep. I came to work for the Germans, and I missed my train, and I don't know where to sleep. Oh, she said, my child. You go with us. And they took me to the church. It was . I know the church, and I was so happy. Again I had soup and I what to eat at night and again the music playing and they sing the beautiful songs, you know, Christmas songs, and uh I couldn't figure out myself who I am, and I had my . I had to sleep and I was thinking maybe I can be through the war. I can stay here. They said why not. They told me I can stay. And the caretaker came up in the morning and say are you not Jewish? You are Jewish. I took him, I left my potato peeling. I left my cup. I left my apron, and went across other church. It was, you know, so beautiful the next day and it was for the Christmas party, before Christmas, or December I remember, so I go to other church and and sit down and cry and prayed. I said God must understand me any languages, but I am here, so I sit in the church and then an old woman go. I said to her where you go. She said oh I'm going...I must pick up some wood. And uh...oh, I said. I can help you. I went on church, you know, after the communion. I didn't do the communion but I was sitting in the fifth row and I was praying. I know the holy word. I know everything and I came from a small town. I knew the Christian religion very well, so I came and she take me to an old age home. I came in. It was a this so. are old. They y cups were not washed. The coffee, you know, was standing maybe a half maybe washed. I start to wash it and I start to jump again. I start to sing again. I was so happy. Two, three days...a man came in from the...from the government and said listen, I hear some young girl's running around here, and I said there are no young girls here to the woman. She said OK. But when I left at night, she says, Fani, I will leave you the card, and I didn't have...I don't have...I have my birth certificate, but I didn't you know...to call myself Francisca, so but I still lived, you know, I told my name Fani, but later on, couple week later, I called myself Francisca. I couldn't change right away. So the...when the man from the government...

Q: Could you explain a little more bit more about the card that you were talking about.

A: Oh yes. And she says I'll lend you the card and go that night and the next day I must go. So...

Q: Your own identity card?

A: No. A cart. You know...

Q: Oh...a cart, a wooden.

A: You know, card, like future...no...my future card...play card. She tell me the future.

Q: Oh...she's...oh...she's a fortune teller looking at your...

A: Yeah, yeah. And she start to tell uh...she didn't know nothing about, she says I know you're Jewish. And I just broke down. That's at finish. I start to cry so much and I tell her...she was maybe seventy-five...yes I am. She says don't worry my child. In the 1st World War, I fed a lot of Jews, and I could...I could save you too, but I can't. I said you are OK. So the next day I left, but...you know, from the government the man came in and said I cannot stay, and I left. I left. I didn't know what to do with myself. I called right away my aunt, that I'm on the street again, so I left and I went on the street so disappointed, and I put myself on a , you know...

Q: A kerchief?

A: Yeah. And I...and I went on the main street and all of a sudden I kept...the tall, blond, beautiful girl, and she knew me from home. I don't know...the girl knew me but she passed by every day and she knew the young girls and she says, oh, Fani. It's you. I said yes. Take , she says and go for a job. You're a young girl. What you doing for yourself? And she disappeared, but she didn't want to talk to me, to stay too long. Then the SS man pass by. Right away they leave, so this went in my head, what she said to me. What I did, did the same day I went to the employment office. I went to the employment office and I didn't...I wasn't afraid of nothing, and they say what do you have to show, what kind of job you look. I said well I saw in the paper today a man by...a doctor...German , and he lives there and it will cost a hundred and twenty five, and I want the job. And she says, well, I can give you the job but some papers you have. I said, well the...I have only the birth certificate. And she said well, I need a passport. I need food cards...I need lots of...I said listen. Don't worry. In ten days, in twelve days, I come back and I bring you the cards. I bring you the other papers. She says OK, and she gave me the address and I right away went to...with the street car I went, and I saw right away Jews, you know, wearing the bands who cannot sit and they will come stand up, but I didn't have my band on. Right away I sit. And I came. It was like a...like a villa, like you see like here like Potomac Mall, the big houses, beautiful houses, and I ring the bell. And the woman didn't come in. Was the manager who let me in. Oh, I came in and the office...beautiful floors where people live. I couldn't believe...I couldn't, you know...I...I try but I cannot cry, so what happened. She says listen. I cannot...in German...said to me...and the baby right away sprang to me, right away came to me. I cannot hire you now. My husband went out shooting something, so tomorrow the doctor will be home. You come again, and we'll hire you. So I left again, and I didn't have where to sleep again. So I went on the streets and I passed out the . A lady came out. She was putting water on the flowers. She said oh, my dear child. You are my daughter's room mate. I said yes. I didn't whose the daughter it was, what her daughter was, and she took me in. She was a professor's wife, with the professor and she took me in. She gave me soup. And she says listen, you can sleep over tonight. That's OK...but uh she didn't say how long I can stay. At night the professor had this colleague come over. They had a party or some ...what will be to make all the Jews with the trains and what will be maybe they start witht the Jews and they could finish with us. And I am in the next room. I hear it...everything. So the next day the professor's wife goes to work and he went to work and she, you know, the...all the beautiful rooms with with beautiful things that I liked so much, so she says right away, Francisca, you know, we can put some

peroxide on your hair, and she know I go for a job. You look much better. Then my hair was light brown, with a little, and I did it. It was blond. Not too much blond. And I had thick hair and I uh, you know, what I took a bath twenty times. And three o'clock I had an appointment and I nobody was in the house, so I was my my own, you know, my own self and I close the door and I took a bath, and so I was. I look in the mirror. I couldn't believe it's me. I couldn't believe it's me. So...and I must put up a smile on my face. Couldn't be anymore like it was before. I took off my my handkerchief from from my hair and I just went straight and looked people in the eye. This is the way it is, and this will be a from now on. This is the way it will be. I will look everybody in the eye and say this is and this is. Yes and yes and no and no. I will live, I will live and if not, I will not. But what can I do. I knock three o'clock on the door, in the...I push the button. The button open himself. The manager came out. Downstairs was working ten Pole, Polish people. a chauffeur and a beautician, everything for this one doctor, and I was...I came in and the doctor, oh gosh...a tall fellow, an SS I man, and he come in, all in the boots, all shiny in the morning, you know, all dressed up at three o'clock and he came in in the in the office and I sit and he said uh what kind of paper you have. I said I have the birth certificate and I said my name is Francisca , and he said where is your other papers. Well, doctor, I can have papers. I can go in ten days or something. You give me time. I will go for the papers. I'll go home. In the meantime, the the uh woman from the house, Mrs. ,say you stay here, and she right away she showed me the room and this were the day, Christmas night, '42, of '42. Yeah. Christmas night I went down. I kiss again the floor. I cry so much and uh she put books, you know, three for the children. She tell me what to do and I think later on I got to...have sit down to eat, a half goose, red cabbage and I ate it but she says you know, Francisca, maybe you you can iron a blouse for my husband. Oh my goodness...I have to iron. I couldn't iron. I don't iron. And she came downstairs. She said OK. I have somebody to iron. At night was a big party, and I put the baby to sleep and I helped the the Gestapo wives the minks, put in the closet and there was . Again, even with Stalingrad...there was a Stalingrad...they couldn't get from started out, and they knocking on the on the tables. They have discussion and one, I think two o'clock I start...they went home. I start to clean up the dining room. I look up. I see Hebrew letters. It was a villa from a doctor, from a Jewish doctor. They put him to...they kill him and took over his villa. So I was with them about two, three months. In Jan...oh my God...oh I make...this night I make hundred dollars from the from the SS...hundred mark you know, and uh all kind of presents for Christmas, and I got, from the lady I got a robe and a and I bad beautiful time over there, but I didn't went out too much and I didn't go out. Then downstairs was the Polish help. I was afraid. I never had to do with the Polish people. I was right away afraid, very much afraid of them. Then after the two the SS, one night the uh...the the next day the employment office called. The employment office called and said uh send me your nanny. You have help. I need to know the details, the papers. I came to the employment office. In the meantime, the lady what she gave me the papers, for she borrowed the papers, my aunt meet in the cafe Mrs. Niederman. She came back from Italy and she had her Christmas and she came the same day. I came over from the employment office, look for the papers. I came home. I pack my clothes, and down...I look down. Mrs. Niederman wait for me. I pack my things and Mrs. Diedrich (ph) and the doctor didn't say where are you going. I say I go home and pick up my papers. To be sure I will come back, they took away my robe, my house shoes. The baby was crying. I

couldn't help it, and I went down with this Mrs. Niederman. I came down and we embrace again and we were crying again. This is this lady which she told my aunt in the cafe that so this Jewish girl, I will make a German, and this she did. She uh took me. I went down and we went down with the streetcar and I didn't want sit down. She says you stupid, she says. Sit down. And was big, you know, uh advertising. No Jew can sit. Nobody from the Jewish can sit, but you know, I was in my...half I was still Jewish. I was thinking even I don't wear the, you know, the Star of David, I am still a Jew and she knew and I said let me...she said you sit down, she says to me in German, so quiet and sit there. Don't stand up, and we went and she took me I remember to her apartment. We came to the apartment. It was only for Germans, and I was all overwhelming, happy. I didn't know what to do. I was very excited and I forgot to roll down the the windows and I...when she went shopping I tried to try on her minks, she...everything. Then a soldier knocked on the door. Heil Hitler, he said. Why don't you close the windows. I said, you know, it's bombar...bombs coming in here. So the next day she says you stay here for a while. Then we'll take you to Radom, and she had a big position. She was a secretary to the SS, and she saved, she saved fifty Jew she saved. One dentist and took them to Israel, and me.

Q: What was her name?

A: Mrs. Niederman. She was born in Berlin. She had only one daughter and she...her son-in-law was a doctor, and I know everything, but we were talking at night with her. She says you know, Francisca, when the Russian come and I pretend to be Russian, I couldn't do what you do, so she uh took me in. It's a new life for me in Radom. It was the same thing. It was only for Germans, and I was over there...

Q: Please tell us about your relationship between your aunt and this Eleanor Niederman.

A: My aunt met Mrs. Eleanor Niederman in a cafe, in a cafe. She was looking for something to save me and her daughter. My aunt had a daughter too, lives in Germany, so my cousin so she went every day and till she met her and talked to her, and they became friends. She tell her about who she has home and hidden and she might do something and I, like I was, had the engineer, you know, downtown hidden too by them, by the couple. But I didn't have any papers. I have only my uh...the birth certificate is all I had, but she says bring me your photo from your niece. My aunt brought the photo, and she says from this Jewish girl, I'm a German. Said don't worry. No other 30 people but my husband in heaven. It it had...it it wasn't her husband. I don't know if they marry or not. It was Doppler (ph). So... he did, and uh all he knew, how many Jews are taken all to the train. He was the one... he the uh taking all the Jews from Radom, from all over, to the train. He's the one.

Q: What is...what is the relationship between the SS Doppler and Mrs. Niederman?

A: Well, I think...I cannot tell what the relation was, and she had a different condominium. He had a different condominium. They were very good friends, but he was the boss and was really divorced.

Q: He was divorced?.

A: Yeah. This I knew.

Q: And they were friends?

A: They were friends, and I don't know Doppler knew who I was, whether I was a Jew or not. Or she told him. I don't know. I cannot, you know, tell you. Uh I know...I know only one thing...that I was prepared and uh she had one day, you know, at night we was talking...talking this...oh how can I...how can I do the same thing as the other . I never can do, and the Russian came and I could be Russian. I can never do what you do, to me. You do marvelous things she says. Then one day she come up and she says...it was Easter time...she says 2- 3 ? Francisca, they'll taking today all the Jews out from Radom. How could you...you know, you can do nothing, you cannot help them. I know, but this terrible for you. I said I didn't know. You see, I went my way. I didn't read the papers too much. I did what I must do. I helped...I to much either, the maid. Do you clean...the Doppler had a Ukrainian maid, but when the maid went away on vacation, I went over there and helped to clean and...but sleeping, I always sleep at Mrs. Niederman's house, uh apartment, and she always used to go to the ghetto for uh making dresses in the ghetto in Radom...they still had a ghetto. They took Jews out, but still the ghetto, they keep it. You know why...in the ghetto, they always...the shoemakers, the tailors, and they did all the work for the Germans, so when she had all the time her clothes and so I went -' to the ghetto. When I went one night, Friday night. I came in Friday...oh, I see the candlelight and my goodness, it's...I was...I was upset . I couldn't say nothing from this, you know. I went to the to the cashier to pay the money. Then...

Q: How did you get from Lemberg to Radom?

A: I told you how I get...Mrs. Niederman took by truck, at night.

Q: With you...she went with you?

A: With me...she moved too. She got...she was transferred to Radom, in the office. It was in Radom, so she was working in Radom.

Q: And she took you with her?

A: She took me with...yeah. And I was over there a couple months.

Q: Working for Doppler?

A: Working for her too.

Q: Her and Doppler?

A: But mostly her. By Doppler I work only when the maid went on vacation, so at night, some nights his friends came in, all SS. I remember I must set the table, and the dog ate the salami. I pick up the salami from the floor and, you know, right away I wash it off and give them the salami from the floor and all the, you know, the...been prepared, the delicacies, the delicacies. There was . I put them on the table for them eat, and nobody see what I did it. I was in the kitchen, and uh well, the next day he tell me, oh uh down stairs was sitting SS too...was an SS house. They say to me, all the SS men tell...oh, Francisca, when you open the door and carry the clothes to the...you make too much noise. We cannot sleep. You know, I went closing the door with the, you know, not quiet, and the whole thing...I'm not a really maid. I'm a . I'm not so good what they're , so thank God the the Ukrainian maid came back. Well, I tell you one day I uh...he had this uh his razor blades, his uh...he has electric to cool water, to make hot water, and I put in the milk, and it start to burn and all the kitchen start to burn. Oh it was so messy. Don't and you are not Francisca I will yau, but he, later on...

Q: You're talking about when you were working for Doppler, the SS Doppler in Radom?

A: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. When the maid...the Ukrainian lady went home on vacation.

Q: Could you begin by saying when I was working for the SS officer Doppler...

A: Oh, when I was working for the SS Doppler, then I started to work, and I start to work in the kitchen. I work in the kitchen when this maid was back from vacation. On vacation...she went . She was a good maid. She know how to do everything. I didn't know, so this was the . I was two, three weeks and the maid came back and I went back to the Niederman. It was only a block. So in the meantime I went for the Niederman to the ghetto and I picked up my...her clothes, and one day an SS , he said he knew me. I know who you are. - My father sold, you know, wheat to your father. I said what? Couldn't be. I'm not this...in German...and I ...I said this I'd like to pay. This is Doppler, sent here, Ober fuhrer Doppler here. He said can I you, and I work for him, you know, so right away I went with the with the birth certificate. It was in Latin, and I went to the to the church again. I went to the priest, and I said please Father, tell me. What this mean in English or German or Polish...what, this mean? He said it mean, your father is Polish, born in in Poland, in Lemberg, and your mother is born Maria Schmidt (ph)? and your father is George. Your father is George and and they are your really parents. That's all this says, and don't be scared, and I run back right away to the Niederman. I say Mrs. Niederman, have you , and what's happened to me. She says . Don't be afraid. What's to be afraid? Look in the eyes, and I thought my gosh, he said if you will be afraid, how could you live through this war, she tell me. How could you...I start to cry. I said I'm afraid, I'm afraid to go out. You go again. So the next day I go again in the ghetto, then with the She short my bread. In the , she says, I hope, she says, you go to America. You tell people what we go through. I said what I tell the people. Who...I'm not, you know, Jewish. I cannot tell it, and she said you are not Jewish. No. Then was a shoemaker in ghetto. He said, OK he said...I need...I saw . I saw, you know, in Yiddish to

me. I didn't answer. I didn't talk. I rather took my cleaning and went out. When I went out of the ghetto, I saw a bus standing, beautiful bus, beautiful pictures. The movie was playing. I went in right. I went in , and he , and I looked pictures...Israel...who like to go to Israel, sign up, sign up here. Oh, tricky they were. How clever they were, so lots of people signed up, young people, from the ghetto and they took them away to Israel...where they took them away...to the death camps. This on the Jewish people. Even when they want to, you know, to hide or you want to be in the ghetto...they took a big bus . They go in the...everything was real elegant, and the pictures of Israel, of Jerusalem, of Tiberia (ph), Tel Aviv...everything they had, photos. And who like to go. I see. I saw myself people sign up, young people, to go to Israel. What can I do? Can I tell them something? I didn't know myself. I left the bus and went home. On the way home, I saw from the movie theater, . I said...and a and a SS man...heil. Hitler, to me. I said Heil Hitler. I said what is wrong here. What's happened, you know, in German. Oh, he said, it's...a Jewish...somebody...it's for Jewish people in the movie. They caught a Jewish girl, and everybody went out from the movie, and all standing outside, and I went with my cleaning and I go up and went, you know...I was walking home to Mrs. Niederman. I came home. I just fell apart. I was crying so much. I was afraid. It was bad, the left, you know, . Then really really they went on the Jews. They picked them up and this they didn't want nobody to live. They want nobody tell what happened, nobody. Everybody was thinking they take every Jews and kill them. It didn't happen, so when I came back to Mrs. Niederman, she says oh oh Francisca. You know, you must take a job. I ? did, I said oh...I went to the police. I said I can write in Polish and German. I can help you out when you need it, so they gave me in the office I I write up pass...passports. I didn't work long and for two, three months and I was afraid. And these people came from the Ukraine, and they came here to Radom, and they came on the police, and I was afraid somebody would recognize me. In the meantime in the police, I met a girl from Black Forest and she was married and her husband born in the United States. He was a prison...in prison and he was working on the on the on the farm. The American soldiers took them in prison on the war, so we became very good friends. Listen, she says, Francisca, you know, I'm taking an apartment and I want you to go with me. Do you want? I said, yes, I will speak to my best friend where I live now, Mrs. Niederman. I came home. I asked her, and she says my dear, be very, very careful, and if somebody, somebody approaches never never tell where you are, who gave you the papers, who , who took you...never. One word...she said don't mention it. And she was a secretary in the SS . She was, on one side..she was with them and one side she was with the Jews.

Q: Did your aunt pay Mrs. Niederman any money to help you?

A: I don't think so, you know. I don't think so. I don't know, you know. I don't...maybe she did and maybe she didn't...I don't know. Could be. Could be not. I don't know. And then my aunt always prayed, once my only one paper in the family, one , you know, and she will be sure I am saved. So I working for the police and I was living with a girl and I had a good time too...was living in a nice, beautiful apartment, not between the Germans, between everybody. Downstairs was a dress shop. Over night the dress shop is not here, and they said what's happened. And they said well, the Jewish girl had a dress shop. A Jewish girl had a

dress shop, and the police came, pick her up. She disappeared. She a dress shop and she disappeared, so after a to the police, I say well, I'm looking for another job. I want something better.

Q: Before we go on, let's...you need to describe more about your experience working for the police....who you worked for...?

A: No. I worked for...I don't remember...the captain or something. I don't remember.

Q: What exactly did you do?

A: I do passports. I assigned passports.

Q: When you talk say I worked for the police...

A: I worked for the police assigning passports, in this office. That's all I did, and I met up a girl, German Even the pictures, you see, I and the Germans. They were nice friends to me. They didn't know who you are, who I was, but they was uh nice people to me, and uh I didn't work long. The reason I didn't work long...three, four months...the reason I didn't work long is when the people came in from the Ukraine, from all over, and I was afraid somebody would recognize me, so I stopped working. I just did another job. I wanted more money to make. I didn't make too much money. So this was the reason I left the job. I don't remember what the captain's name was, but he told me I go to Germany and marry a nice German boy. I said yes. That's all.

Q: Did he think you were a good worker?

A: Oh yes. Yes, of course. I think is the reason why I got a letter from Hitler.

Q: Tell us about that.

A: The end...I finished this job. I went on another job, to...for...I worked for a for a company like a , only for Germans, and in the meantime Mrs. Niederman came back again and she told me she will make uh do application for me to be German. Yeah. I must...a German...I must be German, to go to Germany. She want me to Germany and the Russian was beginning '43 and the Russian was coming. She was afraid, and those the reasons I was working later on in two firms. was a Vienna firm, and I was working. I was there uh . And one day the manager saw me in cafe eating lunch. He said I think you are Jewish, look Jewish. And what I did, when he told me this, can you imagine how I feel. I couldn't eat. I couldn't sleep at night, and uh I lived already by myself. I couldn't tell Mrs. Niederman. I couldn't run to her every minute, so what I did I went home and I told the manager to give me another job, and they had another job in down under the , like suburbia, and I took this job, with seventy people and nobody bothered me. Nobody . I was there. I was working and in the meantime I...I don't know what's happened. I didn't fight with my roommate. I think...I

went on my own and I took a a room for myself in a basement. It was near to my job, and I took a room in a basement and I...beautiful but a nice room and I always see outside. I looking outside one day when three boys going by, and the police are taking them and they said we are not Jewish. We are not guilty of crime. We are not Jews. And they say, well, with me...you know, in German...and they crying so much, you know, and I was looking. I hear everything, but I couldn't do nothing about it. So one day the the manager of the apartment told me, you know, Francisca, in the older apartments, a blond Jewish girl lived, and she goes with an SS man.

Q: With an SS man?

A: With an SS man, yes. come every night. I say I don't see it, you know. I didn't, you know, pay attention. This Jewish girl married the SS man, went to Hanover, and she was recognized and she got killed. That's all. They took her away from him, right away, and probably they killed the SS man too.

Q: When you worked in the uh police office, besides the fact you were concerned about people coming through, did you have any uncomfortable experiences?

A: No. I didn't see nothing from the Germans. The police had only, you know, passports, traffic tickets...no, no, no, no. It was a different...it was different from the SS...they had different...they didn't have...

Q: The police...

A: Yeah. The police from the from the state, from this Radom, from the State of Radom.

Q: Now could you tell us about the letter from Hitler?

A: Yes. 1943 before everybody went, you know, uh the Russians came near to Poland, and the Niederman wants me...Mrs. Niederman wants me not to be, you know, here between here in in y Radom and the Russians, so she said you will be a German citizen, so she make application. I don't know where she made application, and in the meantime it was late August 1943, I got a letter in the mail from Hitler from Berlin, signed. Through my behaving how I worked, in the PX, you know, for the Germans, in this store and this store, you are honor...you get honor...great honor me to say thank you. And signed Adolph Hitler, himself. I came home. I showed this to Mrs. Niederman. We were laughing, ah ah...I tell you, we were laughing so hard. See...see...you get somewhere, she told me. So when I got this letter, I put it away. I said oh, someday I'll show this to people. So I put it away. And...

Q: Could you just please repeat about the letter from Hitler, with the date when it was sent and exactly what it said?

A: It was 19...it was 1943. The month...I don't...August or...I didn't even have my paper, my

German papers yet. I wasn't Commission yet.

Q: But you say in August 19...

A: In August 1943, I got a letter from Berlin, air mail...Francisca . or something where I lived, and a letter...through your behavior, through your hard work, you're an honest orphan, and all the orphans will be transferred to Germany, so this is the way I got the papers, after I got my papers...and thank you very much. Adolph Hitler. That's all. It was was a short letter. There was not or something, a short letter. And I kept the letter. I kept it, with my papers, all the papers, so when I got the letter, I showed Mrs. Niederman. She was very proud of me, and uh she start to coming to school at night too, to learn stenography, but I didn't went too long and it was six weeks, when the girls that was there start talking about the Jewish people, they caught this girl and they caught this girl...I was afraid. I said Mrs. Niederman, I cannot go on. I don't...I don't want to learn stenography. I had typing...I don't want to learn. I'm afraid, so in the meantime one Sunday I had the papers, everything together, so...and uh I was Ober furher Oppler...Doppler told me, Francisca, tell me ? what your grandfather's name, and what your grandmother's name, and I'm thinking. In the meantime Mrs. Niederman had a robe that or sex...oh, Lou, do you remember what your grandfather...how can she remember? She's a young girl. See. Oh, she was...she was terrific, and he sign all the papers. And they say Ober furher Doppler, the big SS man, so I got a stack of paper later on to go to the Commission to be a German. It was late August. Mrs. Niederman go again to Italy with Doppler, to Italy...they all traveled to Italy all the time...and she tell me, listen, when they caught you, I can you only bring you flowers on your grave. Remember. Don't give no names. Remember, once for all, and she kissed me goodbye and she left. I was on my own. Oh gosh, on the days I was fine. At night, lying praying, praying to God...please help me. Please help me, God. What will be when they recognize me, the doctors recognize me with the Commission. I don't know what they do. So...in the meantime a lady who cleaned the floors in the apartment where I was living, said Francisca, you know, I take you to the chapel where the king performed before he went to war. I said please...it was Sunday morning. It was three hours to walk. It was beautiful, tall and the day before I went to the Commission, I went to the chapel. I say, lay some, throw something...I don't remember...uh you stay out, I said to her. I'll go myself. And I start to cry, and I thought you must help me. You was running too. You was a Jew sometime too, and you was running. Please, please help me. I must go tomorrow for a big test. And I went home. At night I didn't sleep all night. I think my God, how can I see nine doctors. What will they do to me? I don't know what they will do to me. So mine name is...I went nine o'clock, and they kept me till five. And my name is W. I was the last one. I came in the office, a horseshoe, like a horseshoe. Nine doctors, and everybody saying what's your mother's name, what's your father's name, again and again and again and again. And I tell them. And later on they tell me to take off my clothes, measure my nose, measure my hips...I don't know what they do...measure my arms, and they took blood from this ear, and there later they said that I have ninety percent German blood and ten percent Polish. I'm really German. After all the paper Niederman was now laughing. You see. So I left the office at night. The nine doctors, when I left...I left myself out and was so happy...tell me, are you . I said no. Well, well...and run away. Didn't talk to

him. was a doctor too. I didn't stand up. I didn't say anything. I didn't talk to him. I just ran out from the Commission, went home. You can imagine...I felt so much. I was so happy. I was to go to Germany. Nobody will know me. In Germany, nobody will know me in Germany. I was so happy. I didn't sleep again all night, and I was thanking God. I said thank God for what you did for me. Only you can help me. Only I have in you a friend. I talked to him. I but I talked all night. I was overwhelming that everything went as smoothly. In two, three days, Mrs. Niederman came from vacation, and she said no, you will pack, my dear. I said what? You are going to Germany. But you will wait a while till all the papers come, out, so a couple of weeks and all the papers come in, and uh I went with my roommate. I met her. She told me she'd take me to Black Forest, my roommate. She was still my roommate. I still talk to her, to telephone. I still see her all the time. Even I was...I lived separate. I still saw her, so she says...from different always promise me, my husband is not home. He is in Ger...in the United States, of all things, so you stay with me. I have a room and my in-laws there. No man is there. You have a nice time. She lived too in the forest...a villa. It was beautiful. So we went to Berlin, trip to Berlin. In the...in the train, they're looking for passports, passports ...you know, the SS...looking. They go to me and look at the papers. Heil Hitler, heil Hitler to me, and they all salute me. Can you 7 imagine that they they salute me, and uh thank you very much. everything, and they didn't know what to do with me. Sit down here. Please sit down here. They didn't know...I don't know....this was all young people, and I was sitting with the girlfriend and Mrs. Niederman, I didn't Mrs. Niederman. I kiss her goodbye and I was crying. I hope...I hope we can see each other again, I told her. So when I came to Black Forest, I came to her house. two days from Berlin. But a lady was working in the police too...she kept me two days too. I make lots of friends...all older people, no young people. An old lady...maybe sixty-five then, has no family, but I like her.

Q: Why not younger people?

A: Younger people...these younger people, younger people tell me where you live, what you did, where you went to school, from where are you, which city, and your accent, it is Polish or something. I don't like...and they always uh you know, needle me about there the proper Jewish...they don't know I'm Jewish...but all the time they talk about Jewish people, and I don't want it. Only older people...with older people I have peace and quiet. So when I uh when I...after two days in Berlin, I went to, a small town in the Black Forest, beautiful, peaceful. I went skiing all over, all over, and the mother-in-law liked me too and the sister liked me too. All, so I went shopping and I the start telling me I had a son and you will marry him when he come back from the...I said of course I will marry him. I promised everybody, everything I promise. So I was staying there I think two months 1944 and there was Nazis, and they heard...

Q: Which...where were you? What town were you in?

A: Friedsi (ph)...

Q: Which is near...?

A: Near , near Stuttgart, on top of Stuttgart.

Q: Could you just begin by saying I was staying in the Black Forest with the family, the name of the family...

A: I was staying with Mrs. ...

Q: Could you ?

A: You know, in the Black Forest, and took me over there home to her house. I was staying over there two months or three months. After the good time skiing and have a good time, so I said well, this will not be . I don't want to stay and do nothing, so I went...I took a train three hours. I went to Schramberg. It was...it was not far from Switzerland, and is a town where they make watches and , so first I went...

Q: Were you by yourself?

A: By myself. I don't need nobody. On the train and at night I went home. I went to to sleep. I didn't have no room yet. I didn't look right away. I just took a train and I start to learn myself from the watches, and do something...for the watches in the airplane, you know, the watches, the . So you see the watches in an airplane, the big watches, the clock, yeah...and I was learning to fill in. Normally to fill in with light light color, light color, so must be very careful all the letters...one, two, three...very, very carefully. In the meantime I see in the paper six looking for a girl to help her. Thought well, I may be between them. I will take a job there. So I went to...back to took my clothes and went for interview and when I came to interview, right away they hire me. I had one year chemistry in school but the Russians...the Russians had very good schools, so I was thinking maybe I can do something for them. And they were gemologists, so...and when I got hired I went to look for a room. So on the same city I went for a room. I came. I look in the paper. It's a room for rent and I came to the lady...a beautiful street, beautiful, very nice. She says listen. I have a room. I have my son's room. My husband goes home every...every week he's coming home...weekend. And he's a . He works for the postal. He's a CPA in a factory job. I can only take in girls who behave themselves. I had before a girl and she wasn't so nice. Dates, and they were drinking. She didn't want this. I said no, Mrs. Effinger (ph)..Effinger. I will be nice and I will be good. I took my clothes, took everything and she gave me the son's room, and he was nine years old, and the girl fifteen. The girl was in the next room, and I was in the son's...son's room. But when I came in, the son right away recognized my accent. He said you are Polish...Polish accent. He was laughing. My German, he said... . And he right away tell me what...everything he tried to teach me to religion, the German religion. This is the madonna, and this is Christ. He tried to teach me, so right away he know I got very good...you know, with him, the boy and with the girl, in very good terms, and the next morning I went on the job. I was working. I was I didn't do too good. When I worked the girl did, one girl did, I did the same thing. She measured the stone. I measured. She weighed the stone. I weighed the

stone. I and I got nice money from...three hundred dollars a month or something they gave me. I came...after six weeks the manager called me in. The says you know, Francisca, we'd like to keep you, but you are not a gemologist...(laughter) and they fire me. Not they fire me but say they can't keep me. So I went again home to the room...I had a room...and across from my room was the sister-in-law, the...Mrs. Effinger's sister-in-law. A lady for seventy-five years. You know, I'm only with older people, so every night I was sitting with her and she showed me her...she went to Rome to see the Pope and I always sitting with her. I didn't have no place. I . I went out. Not ...time to go. So Mrs. Effinger told me, you know, Francisca, don't go with the Germans. They're nothing. Don't go with this . They're nothing. So that's how it is. The next day I think I will look for a job. Then I was...I was looking for the uh Swiss . I went over there and I make application. They hire me right away. We came down. I was working half days and working half day, and they tell me, oh, you shouldn't work here, the manager tell me. You should work upstairs in the office. So they took me in the office ..clean, nice. Downstairs it was...store was very downstairs. Gypsy was working and was working for all the Polish people, and I was very...very much afraid of Polish people, very much. And they start to talk to me and tell me again and again and again and I was , so I was only trying German, only German on the . So I uh...they hire me. I went later after they hire me, I went back to. I took my old clothes and went back to Schramberg. In my room I put my clothes. Oh...the bed was heaven. I saw heaven on it. From this day, I saw heaven. It was so beautiful...and I tell Mrs.Effinger, I'd like to help you. No, no, no, you don't need. One thing I want you to do, to go with me every to the church. And I did. One day-in the church, I'm sitting in the fifth row. The...everybody go to communion. I go to communion too. It was not nice and they and they start to give the piece I don't know...the piece of the communion...

Q: The wafer.

A: The wafer...and when Mrs. Effinger say swallow it. I didn't know what to do with it. Swallow. Swallow. She pushed me. And I think this time I think she recognized who I am. I don't know if she knows it or she didn't know. I think she knew...and I swallowed it. And the whole town knew what happened, so when I was came to work and all start to say, Francisca, what's happened at church today. Oh, I say...what's happened. What's happened. The priest had a, you know, a sermon. It was honor mother and father. I cried so much I couldn't forget it. I didn't tell the story about the...so after I cry in the church, after this , the nun came down from the Catholic and took me upstairs, took me upstairs and tell me and try to...she took off her habit habit and try... she said. I don't know what she was. I don't know who she was. y And she was crying so much, said you think I had a good...I go to heaven all the time. Now to God. You put up girl. And for this I start to cry. I went down and the next day they had Christmas again for and they say each girl must sing Christmas song from their country. Can you imagine, each orphan. I was pray , singing I don't know...I don't remember...the the Polish...uh the Christmas song...I don't remember, and anyway when I was gave something to girls from France and the girl from Czechoslovakia and the girl from Poland and come now Francisca, you...I start to think I don't know from where, and I start to sing . And they all clapped and next thing was a Polish girl...how can you forget? How can

you not think tonight? How can you forget the words? said I sing the words, and I left her. I never was friends with her, never was friends with her. I was never friends with her, and she tell me this. I didn't sing proper the words. The nun didn't say nothing, but she did..the Polish , on Germany, on any place. They want this to be death of the Jewish people, that's all, only Polish. But not the Poles. More people will be safe, and the Germans didn't know that or our home is Christian or Jew, so when I went home

Q: Was this a group of orphans, you said?

A: It wasn't a group of orphans. or something like this. At Christmas night they gave us a nice, you know, like a dinner and they tell us each uh each orphan must sing a , you & know, a song, and I was almost crying that the the priest saw I was out a mother and father. I was crying, of course, you know...I was crying and already bothered with thinking what's happened to me. All of a sudden, I had a handkerchief and crying, and the what's happened to you, but after the party was, I went home, and then I was working till April '45 and uh it was April 20th. You know, it's Hitler's birthday, and all was hidden and uh you know, hiding place and all, the ...you know why...when the bombs came in from France, the French army took over and we were not far from the French uh you know, border, you know. And oh, I didn't pretend and the priest tell to me, Francisca, the war it will to end. You time for you when you marry a Christian soldier, a Christian boy, and settle down in Germany and raise a nice German family. I said yes father. And that's all. I didn't see the father any more, and I was back to my, you know, to Mrs. Effinger's house. It was two, three months till I became Jewish again. Everybody goes home and I think...and I was tell them where I'm going. You go home Francisca? I said yes, yes, yes. I will go home. Polish girl. I'm sitting on a bench in down town with, you know, thinking what to do, and two Polish girl tell me, you know, this lady's a Jew. Or this lady. At night I said it's , and she took me to her plays, and you know, the dialogue, it was not definitely till after the war. She played the piano and she again, . I will meet a God-fearing man and I will go with , have two children, and will be very happy, and uh the next day I...here she comes, you know. And from two girls, I said Jewish. They say yes. I say what. From . Was two girls, Helena and . One from Krackow and one from Warsaw. But they were very, very, you know, even more more from the...I'm a small town girl. I didn't do the things that they do. Party, take their clothes...I didn't do this. Very wild parties. I didn't do this. They could go to German home and take...I didn't do this. So I was with them together, and one girl says Francisca,Fani, you go with me. They call me Francisca. I don't know...you go with us to Paris. I have a sister. She's a doctor and the sister wrote I can bring three girls, so and Helena and Francisca. I said you know I don't know why I didn't. I said you know, I will stay here for a while. I don't go to Paris. It was after the war already. So the the older lady said, you know, I hear in lots of Jewish boy came in from the from the camps, from the concentration camps. I didn't know even a Jewish boy lived. I didn't know it. So I took a train, the next day, with her. We went...four hours, five hours...we went to . Beautiful city, not far from the border of Switzerland, and we came over there. Over there was a Jewish community. I didn't know it. There was everything, and I sleep in the again. I didn't know...paper, no...and we both sleep in the, in the church.

Q: In the church.

A: Yeah. In the Catholic church. The next day we came in. Oh my goodness, this is from Krackow. This is...oh they make parties in the community center, and uh you know, it was very, very happy all together, but I left all my clothes still in uh Schramberg by Effinger's. So the next day, they...I'm thinking what to do with the lady. She said we'll go again. I came again to the Jewish community center. I met...in a hotel I met my husband. I went over there for a coffee, and I see guys, and one was my husband. And he arrived at this hotel and he said uh what I've been through, everything, he says you know, he said, you go to Schramberg, pick up your clothes, and come here and we'll decide...I think we will marry. I said oh God, how can you say this? I must make up my mind. I was...I didn't know what to do, or to go to Italy with this lady, or to go to, to stay in with him. I don't know what to do. After three weeks I went home. I should tell Mrs. Effinger...Francisca, where you been? I said well, I've been...I've been in and I think I move to I didn't tell her nothing. And she...I packed my clothes. Oh, I was crying and crying, was crying. And when I moved, I was thinking I will stay all the time and move, you know, in Schramberg, but that's the story. I went over there and I uh worked over there uh a couple days with the lady. We went home and I came to Schramberg. I pack my clothes and I went back to uh to . I came to and everyday I came to the girls. There was meetings and talking we'll go over there. We'll go over to Italy. We'll go over...didn't know where to go. they had a very nice was a French rabbi, and my husband said to , he said we can't go on like this. And he said do you have your papers. I said no. So then the rabbi said to me, now everybody want to be Jewish. So you girls better . I said rabbi, I'm Jewish, you know, in German. He was a French rabbi. He said OK, but he said you're . You are Jewish. He said come with me in the center yard and I opened the , open up, and the rabbi wanted to hear...two words was enough for him, and OK, you're Jewish. And Rabbi the papers and uh born there and there, and my father's name, my mother's name everything, and I was there still with my husband. Then I went to , and say goodbye to my what I lived for thank you very much, and tell , you know , I'm Jewish. She said you're a Jew, but I'm a . You had good for the Germans, and now you will be Jewish. I said this is the way it is my dear. And goodbye. She was nice and she was not It also had nothing to do with her. With the Effinger people I had a very good something with them. The parents passed away but the children, the daughter comes every year, visits me, and her husband is a doctor. He works for NIH . last year he was in Israel and she writes me nice letters, and later on we all, the five of us, will go to Bergen-Belsen, you know, and take the vows and the story again. The rabbi...I'm not Jewish again. . I went through the ritual, everything, and you the Jewish hotel I got married, in Bergen-Belsen, in 1946, December the 1st.

Q: You got married?

A: Yes. In Bergen-Belsen.

Q: Why did you get married here?

A: Where? Here?

Q: No, in Bergen-Belsen.

A: Why. They...I don't know. It was...my husband would travel all the time to Bergen-Belsen, you know. He was in too, so he knew some friends over in Germany, so we decided it was over there lots lots of Jewish people and was there to uh make the wedding, but my aunt borrowed me her...from . I was . I sent to . After this, I...we lived in Belgium and my husband find some in Belgium. He travel a lot and later on we decide in the fifties to come to the States. It's enough around to travel. In 1943 we're married, and the rabbi in Bergen-Belsen didn't want to give me anyway the from, you know, Jewish wedding. I must say again, show the papers and everything, and this was the story.

Q: And you came to the United States when?

A: In 1950, 1950.

Q: And did you adjust to life in America, in Cleveland?

A: At the beginning it was very hard for me. I was lonely, very hard. I was thinking all the time, about Europe, about home. Very hard...very hard, had a hard time, very hard time, but uh later the Jewish...the Jewish gave me a room and a lady...she was from but she was staying here in the , and uh I was living with them and later on we went on, you know, on our own. and later we lived in Arlington, Virginia, and later Virginia, and my...Linda was born and my husband didn't want, you know, to go to school in Virginia. We were afraid not too many Jewish people. We went to Maryland. We looked around. We settled down in Bethesda.

Q: Is there anything else you wish to add?

A: I wish there had...I don't know why, why we were persecuted. I don't know why. I'm thinking at night sometimes. I don't know why till today. We are a nice people. We pay our taxes. We was happy. We did our duty, and my daddy was a good man. He'll end up...I don't know even where he is. My mother, I don't know where she is. What can I say. I'm thinking what's happened to them, and my sister and my uncle...beautiful people, intelligent people...didn't do nothing to nobody...was good citizens. I don't know...we lived our own lives. We did our duty. go to school. I can't understand it today...why? Why us? Why? The or something. My gosh...I wish...we all became Christians, that's all. We . Big trouble, and all the time, all the time, and you know, the Jew is very intelligent. The Jew likes to learn. jealousy. For a Jewish mother, it's . . She everything for the children, and what's happened? She didn't see nothing, come in, and she said, she never dreamed the children would be . She said all the time she didn't want the children go to America, someplace else. She didn't want photographs of the world. She want her children here, in Poland. There was fifty thou...fifty thousand Christians, and two thousand Jews. We didn't do nothing to them Nothing. They did to us. Lots of things are...they took my cousin in a in a sack and put him in , . Can you

imagine how a live person put in a sack and throw them in the river. My goodness. Yes, this happened. . Yes. This is my story, end to my story. A girl from a small town...I didn't do nobody harm. I learned with the school. I helped . I was a bright little girl. Everything I did. And later on, But on the room was standing some...on the when they took her, she cried. She said you tell your mother they start with the Jewish...they they will pick us up later. Some Christians cried. They took us on the . And some not. people was yelling . There was good German too. Mrs. Effinger, Mrs.Niederman, and already on the other world. They was nice people. They all helped. Beautiful people on the train. boys, young, of the future, all college boys. he did everything for for for the people. He used to go to farms. He was doctor in our town. what they did to him. Put him in the train, like a cattle, with two children... ..he had a beautiful wife. He would not go to the Christian. . It happened in our town.

Q: Thank you very much.

A: You 're welcomed .

Conclusion of Interview