United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Dora Goldstein Roth
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Dora Goldstein Roth, conducted by Linda Kuzmack on June 8, 1989 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.

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DORA GOLDSTEIN ROTH
June 8, 1989

Q: Would you please tell us your name, when and where you were born, and what you remember about your family and town life before the war?

A: I was born in 1932, 1st of February, in Warsaw. My name was Dorotka Goldstein, Goldstein really, and what I remember from my home, well, we have been a very nice Jewish family. My father was director of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. I had a brother and a sister. My mother, what I heard and would remember, was a very nice, uh, lady, uh, kept a very nice home. Everybody knew that she was the best, uh, cook and bake, baked wonderful cookies. What do I remember? We had a very nice apartment in Warsaw. I think that we were well off to do people. My father was a partner in a newspaper too, so we had a maid. I remember she was taking me to school, the maid. I remember Saturdays that my father brought cake and tea to the bed to my mother. I had dolls. I had my own room. Much of the city of Warsaw I don't remember, but, uh, I remember that we had a nice life. I had lots of toys. I loved my Daddy. He was a very good looking man, and everybody said that he was very good looking man. I quarreled with my brother, but I didn't quarrel with my sister because she was 10 years older than me, and I was the youngest and the prettiest and everybody called me called me Coquetka(ph) because I was standing before the mirror for hours, looking at myself, that what I remember, and putting on all kinds of clothes from my mother so that I can act before the mirror . What do I remember? I remember one day, the only day that I have that I remember, that I went to the movies, was a movie with [Franczeska Garla (ph)] and she found a child on a steps of a church and then I came home and I said that I am not the real child of my mother and daddy. I probably am a found child from a church. That's what I remember as a little girl.

Q: What about school?

A: Oh, I don't remember much school because I was, I think I went only to a first grade, and then the war started, so I don't remember anything about school. I don't think that I was in the school more than a, more than a few months, probably.

Q: What about Jewish observance?

A: It's a combination. Look, my mother was born to Hertzog (ph) family, which as you know is a religious family. And my grandfather was with Koftan (ph), black, uh, but he was a modern one. He had a company that dried peanuts, was a wealthy man. My father came from an academic family. His sisters were all learned, learned people. His brother-in-law was one of the most famous violinists in Poland and Krakau. So there was a combination. I don't know if we kept kosher. I don't remember. But there was a combination of my mother who came from a very religious family and probably she did not keep that at home because she married a man that was not religious. If we kept kosher, I don't know. We had a non-Jewish maid. I don't know, I don't know if we were

kosher or not.

Q: Was the family Zionistic?

A: Oh, oh, oh. Very much so! My father visited Palestine, and, uh, my father was a very charitable person, very well known in Warsaw. When Hitler started to throw out the Jews from Germany, he opened a kitchen and he gave hot meals to the people. That I do remember. My father was a very charitable person, not only because he had a wonderful heart, but I think in his position he had to be. And I do remember that in our home Jabotinsky was in our home. I remember that. I didn't know who he was, but I know now that I live in Israel who Jabotinsky was. You know, he was a Zionist, my father. If you call it Zionism. Today, I am not so sure that you can call a Zionist that lives outside of Israel, but if you call it, yes, he was a Zionist.

Q: What do you remember about what happened to you and your family and friends when the war broke out?

A: About friends, I don't remember anything about friends. I didn't have any friends. My father escaped and, uh, he escaped with, uh, most important people, Beck, President Beck, and so on, through Romania to Vilna. We endured the worst, Warsaw ghetto, but he managed to take us out. And we ran away and we came to Vilna. In Vilna, we were together and the short time before Hitler entered Vilna too, and when Hitler occupied Lithuania, my father, there was a knock on the door, and, uh, the Sturmfuhrers entered, and said, Victor Goldstein?" and he said, "Yes." They took us all out and in, on the street, they shot him and said, "You were a Jewish journalist and Zionist," and took out a revolver and shot him. And that was the end of my father. And soon, there was, uh, and soon there was the ghetto. If I remember very well, the scene of the death of my father was that my mother cried. Did I cry? I don't know what, I didn't know what death was. I probably cried only because I saw my mother cry, and this is so far away from me that I really don't know my feelings as a child. I was so small, but we entered the Vilna ghetto and we were with my sister and brother til the liquidation of the ghetto.

Q: Can you describe the life in the ghetto?

A: The life in the ghetto I can better describe than other things. You know in the ghetto, there were schools for children. What we did, we didn't learn much in the schools, we were, we learned how to sing. I know all the Yiddish songs from the Vilna ghetto. I sang them. I have a record with all those songs. I have done it in London. So I knew all the songs. But you have to understand that the Jewish children did not have the right to live, so a few times in the week they came to take out the children, so the schools had bunkers, and we were given brown paper and pencils to keep quiet. So, if you can call it a school, I wouldn't call it, but it was a place where the children came, and every day less and less children came because the children were taken out of the ghetto and put in, and killed. So less and less children were in those classrooms, if you call them classrooms. But I was

lucky, and I stayed until the end, and during some days, my mother did not send me because we had to eat and there was, and horse meat was very expensive. There was no other meat, so she would send me to sell cigarettes and matches on the street. And as I was a good looking child, people had pity on me so they bought matches and cigarettes. I came home with the money. One day I remember, I got beaten up by mother because I gave the money to two children that were helping me and they were they said, they told me that they are hungry and they will help me sell the cigarettes and they were screaming, "Buy from her, the cigarettes, and not from somebody else," so we sold everything and I had money, so I gave them money. And I came home and my mamma, mother gave me on my tushie (ph) because she said, "Well, now with what will be buy the horse meat?" And the horse meat was very good. It was a delikatesse, this horse meat, and she always said if he don't have the money, we won't eat meat. So, days in the ghetto, look, it was different in the ghetto than it was in the concentration camp, (a) Because we were still stronger. We had more food, but we lived a frightened life, a very frightened life. I don't remember much laughter, much smiling. First of all, my mother was already a widow. My sister, who married in the ghetto, Zunder Leizersohn, who was one of the first partisans in Vilna ghetto. He was smuggling out the people to the outside of the ghetto for the, how do you say, _____, woods, and on the last trip of his he wanted to take my sister with him and they were caught, and they were killed. So I do remember that having two widows in this, in this apartment, which we lived, and my sister loved this man very much. I remember he was a very good looking man, and she was 10 years older than me and it was a tragic that he was killed while wanting to take her out of the ghetto. So to live with a mother that cried about her husband and with a sister that cried about her husband in a, in a place where there was no much happiness, so, but that was already the wonderful time, because after that it came only the terrible time. So if I look back to the time in the ghetto, it was paradise towards what happened to me afterwards. So therefore I feel that when I speak about the Vilna ghetto, because I was very short time in the Warsaw ghetto, I first of all, you know, you get brain washed a little bit, that this is your life. And as a child, I didn't know that there was a different life. I didn't understand why, why are we suffering. So, you know, I suppose that for the people that had been much more grown up and much older than me, life was probably unbearable. I didn't have sleepless nights from being afraid what would happen to me tomorrow. I suppose that my mother did. So the time in the ghetto, as a child, I learned a lot of songs and there were children to play, still, and so I would played, and in the nights, my mother would put me in the, in the bunker because she was afraid the Germans came, come in and, uh, uh, would take us away. We were, uh, taught not to be loud. When we were sitting in the bunkers we hardly spoke to each other because we were explained that if you speak the Germans would come and kill you. So as children we were taught to do things which normal children outside of the ghetto wouldn't do it. But it was happy, because I have children. In the concentration camp, I didn't have one. Nobody talked to me. In the ghetto, yah. We were playing, we were playing with stones (cough), excuse me, we were playing with, you know, like little stones, to, uh, we were singing. Was terrible, but it was terrible, but it was not so terrible as the concentration camp.

Q: Can you sing one of the songs for us? One you remember?

A: I remember many songs, but I am not comfortable to sing a song which has to do like a song which I have sang Polish (ph). If I translate it: "Buy from me the cigarettes, only from me because they are not wet from rain. Buy from me and have pity on me. Polish (ph). Buy from me because I am an orphan." Those were very said songs. The songs that were, the majority of the songs of the Holocaust were written in Vilna. Vilna had the theatre, and the majority of the songs were written there, and I know them from that, and I hope that one day you will come to Israel, and there is a record which I have done when I was in London, His Master's Voice. But then, you know, I was 19 years old and I wanted to do that to remember. So I had this song and another song which I sang, and the record was _____ level and _____, which was also very famous song of the Holocaust. _____ which was also written for the Vilna, __. Those are the songs that I have learned in the ghetto. I have not sang them anymore, because I am a happy person. I have wonderful songs now to sing. So, but, if we talk about it, yah, those were the songs that I have been singing.

Q: What do you remember about the deportation?

A: Of the ghetto, the dates of the liquidation of the ghetto, I can tell you. Anyhow dates I couldn't tell you. It wouldn't be real if I tell you, but it was the liquidation of the whole Vilna ghetto and they took us out and there was a selection. There was the right side and there was the left side, and naturally my sister and my brother were on a different, with the men, my mother and my sister on the right side and I was put on the left side. Little did I know that the left side is death, but I didn't want to be alone without them. So with all the screaming which went on, and there was screaming going, because I have seen that woman was holding a baby in her hand and she was screaming not to, the German wanted to take away the baby and put her on the right side, so she was screaming that way that he took the baby and threw it on the wall of the ghetto, and the baby died in a minute. That is in front of me. So I saw that I don't want to be without my mother. So there was so much confusion and I was such a little girl that I ran way without anyone seeing it to the right side and I found my mother and my sister. And from there we went to, we were deported to Kaiserwald-Riga, and in Kaiserwald-Riga, my memory takes me to a very terrible scene. We already knew, I mean, we already knew, even the children that there are gas chambers. And they took us and they undressed us and they said we have to go into the showers. Not showers. for the people already knew the showers are not showers, but gas. And I became so hysterical that I said to my mother and that I vividly remember, "You can die. You are old. I still want to live. Don't let me go there. I don't want to go into the showers." And she wanted to calm me down and she said, "No, it's not to be to die. It's just to wash." And I couldn't listen to her. I throw myself on the floor. "I am not going there. You are old. You can die. I don't want to die." But anyhow, we had to go in, and my memory takes me that I was so hysterical that I really, when they put on the water saw that this is not water, but this was water. We had to wash. We had to

wash. They gave us soap. We had to wash, and we got our establishing dresses, those clothes with, how do you call them, in German stripe. That what I remember, and then the hell started. We were deported from there to Dinenwerke, and from Dinenwerke we were deported to Stutthof. As I understand now by being in Washington that Stutthof was a 100,000 people. I never realized that it was such a big concentration camp. And there I was with my mother and my sister. What did we do in Stutthof? There was no work in Stutthof, but they let us work. They took us from, you had to carry stones from one side to the other side. You had to fill bags of cement and carry them on your shoulder to the other corner of the concentration camp. Very little food, very little food. And slowly, slowly, my mother was dying from hunger. She was not even a human being anymore. She was such a skeleton. Had big eyes and such blue under her eyes. No hair. If I loved her, no. Because she was not a mother anymore. She was a skeleton. And then one day when we were lying on the floor and somebody came to say that your mother died, go and say to her goodbye. And I turned my head and I saw they slapped her to this corner where all the dead were and I said this is not my mother, and I didn't even want to say goodbye to her. And I was left with my sister. And still I had my sister. It wasn't so bad, because she was young and she warmed me up and I don't know if I missed my mother so much because now that I reason to myself, there was no much love that a child felt and I myself am a mother, and I understand in this circumstances, where you see your own children dying from hunger and crying, "Mother, I am hungry," and she couldn't do anything. So what kind of love. Everybody was to himself, and her thoughts I don't know, but I am intelligent enough to understand today that she was suffering, seeing her two daughters. If she gave us a piece of bread, I don't even remember if she gave us her piece of bread, because the piece of bread that we got was very little. And how unselfish can a person be when he is dying from hunger to give the last piece of bread? I don't know. I don't remember if I got from her a piece of bread. The fact is that she died from hunger and I didn't, so she might probably have given sometimes to me her piece of bread. And from then on it was just slowly dying because I had typhoid, there were hours we were both sitting and taking the lice, that we all had lice all over, and the scratching all night long, the scratching that what I remember. You scratched yourself. They were biting you and you took it like this. I must saw sometimes I did get sandwich from a German. I must say that sometimes I did get a sandwich from a German. Sometime, they did have pity on me. Sometimes I got beaten up because I couldn't pick up cement, you know, but I must say to the world today, and this is what I always say and this is what I continue to say, "I don't trust the Christian world anymore." For me, I cannot separate the Germans and the Polacks and the Bulgarians from the Christian world. I cannot separate. I am Jewish. They were not Jewish. It maybe will take another 50 years that I will trust the non-Jewish people, because where were they? Do you know how many times in the Warsaw ghetto I was spit on me, there were spitting because I had the yellow star. Has nothing to do with the Germans. How many time did I hear the word in Poland, Jude, which means Jew. And I was asked by your media people sometimes, "How do I feel to the Christians?" And I would say always, "Yah, today I am 57 years old, 58. I know that there are good people and bad people, but I will never forgive them. I'll never forgive them that they didn't do anything. That the world did not do anything to save us. And I don't know why

the hatred for the Jewish people. I have never done anything wrong in my life. Not before and not now! I feel I am the same as them. I'll never forgive that, the world. Never forgive the Americans for not doing anything and never forgive the world for standing by and seeing that I was dying. No, and my sitting here is because I do want that the people should know. I do want that the people should know that although the world is beautiful and although today they try sometimes to fight against prejudice, I as Dora Roth will never forgive the Christian world for not doing enough and not doing so that I should have not had to suffer 6 years. This is why I live therefore in Israel. I have chosen to live in Israel as a 13 year old child. When I went into the orphan home and they asked me where do you want to go, which orphan home do you want to go, to a Zionistic one or to an orphan home which stays in Poland, and I didn't understand what Zionism was, but I said I want to go to Palestine because I want to be surrounded by Jewish people and not by Christians because I did not trust them. Until today, I fight my own feelings. That's true, because I have seen good Christian people. In Israel, we have a Righteous Avenue for all the Christians that have saved the Jews, but I myself I fight this feeling because it is not good to generalize. But I suffered so much, looked to stand in front of the gas chamber and I was the third one to stand and my sister was put there and two Germans looked at me and said, "Look at this beautiful Jewish child. Rotten Jewish Child. Ferfluchte (ph) is rotten in German. She has such beautiful eyes. She shouldn't die yet. Took me out and said, "Roth, get out." And my sister, knowing where she was going, made with her hands so I shouldn't follow her. She died. And you know what, how can you even today, when you go back to that moment, how can you believe that someone has the right to save me because of my beautiful eyes. This is only what I had? Only beautiful eyes? I was a human being, a child. Hadn't done anything wrong!? So my feelings to the Christian world is not, is not the best, and probably I'll die that way. Is not that I would do any harm to anyone, and if a child would be hungry on the street, I certainly wouldn't ask him, "Are you Jewish or non-Jewish?" That's not with me. I would give the child, whoever the child is. But we are speaking here, you are speaking to me because you want my feelings to, and my story to tell to people that will live after me. So this is my feelings and I am not ashamed to say it. This is how I feel. I don't have anyone except my brother who is not ready to talk about the Holocaust. I don't know what happened to him. He is just closed up to this topic. You can never ask my brother about the Holocaust. It is taboo in his home. He doesn't even ask me how my mother died. So it's me that talks about it. My life afterwards was very good. Although I was shot by a German in the last day in Stutthof, before the war finished they got an order to go into the bararacks and to shoot everybody that is still alive. It was in the morning I got 2 bullets in my back with machine gun, but the Russians came a few hours later and saved me. I was operated four times. They couldn't find the second bullet, but they did afterwards. And I went to Palestine but in Germany, Nuremberg, I got high fever and I developed double tuberculosis, and I, all the children went, and I had to be sent to Marano, first to Grupino to a sanitorium which the Nuns had and then to a Jewish hospital and I stayed 3 years. I had a pneumothorax of my left side, to push the lungs so that it shouldn't breath on its own. And, in 1952, I came to Israel, and married a wonderful man. Unfortunately, my husband died from cancer 11 years ago. We have two

children, Alreet, she is 33, a criminologist; Donny, 27, he is, he finished the Army, he finished the studies, cinematography, communication and media. And I have 2 grandchildren. I have a 7 year old grandchild and a 2 year old grandchild, and my son-in-law is a dentist. We live very nicely in Israel. I love my life. I became a fund raiser. I fund raise for the United Jewish Appeal. I am a fund raiser in Israel. I dedicated my life to the Jewish people and I do it already since 10 years. I enjoy my life. I enjoy very much living. And just to tell you that I don't hate, there was a program in Israel, they asked people that speak German to invite German children to their home. I put my name on it, and I had 2 German children in my home because I have 2 children. So, I can tell you that they week that they have been was not easy because every time we talked I thought to myself maybe their grandfather was the one to put my sister in the gas chamber. Yet, I have done it because I felt that with hatred, and I really mean it, you will not go far. I remember so many times hurting from the non-Jewish people, You are feshtunken Jude (ph), you stinking Jew. So when those two German children were in my home, as I am a very, very, very clean person to the extent my children were suffering, I always said, "Well, did you, did you have a shower." And they said to me, "Oh, Dora, you don't have to have a shower every day." The German children, and I said, "No, you don't" Oh, I think you do." And then I didn't want to let them know that I felt they have to understand that I am very peculiar on that, so I said to them, "But, you know, there was a time that the German people said that we stink, we Jewish people. Now smell, Donny and Alreet. Do we smell differently than you?" Then I was sorry that I said it because it is not the children's fault what happened and I was very happy that they went to Germany and I am sure they were talking to their parents or if they had still grandparents that this was a normal family with normal children with no stinking and no smelling. We laughed together. We played together. I showed them Israel, and it was my way of saying, "I don't hate. I really don't." My way of saying maybe if everybody would do that in the world, there wouldn't be the hatred. That's true. But I myself am not a normal person as all of you. I look at life differently. With all that, I had a wonderful life, a wonderful 26 year marriage, I have started, I have never been in a classroom. I have 2 new university degrees. I have achieved really the maximum one can achieve in such circumstances that I have been left when I was only 17. I entered the ghetto, was 7; I came out to the free world, I was over 17 because I was also 3 years in a hospital. So I really achieved the maximum one can achieve. But in my, deep in my heart, I do, when I walk on the streets and see the smiling people, sometimes I say to myself, "Where were you?" And I carry that and my days today I enjoy things much more powerful than others. I enjoy to open the window in my garden, in my home in Israel and see the blue sky. I live in a very nice house with lots of flowers. I enjoy everything around me. I enjoy tremendously the beautiful things in life. I enjoy theatre. I go to concerts. Maybe I enjoy too much because I just want to have it, what I didn't have. People ask me what kind of a mother was I. Over protective? No. No. I said often the children said, "Mother, show a little bit more love." Because I said well, if they said I have a headache or I have temperature, I would say, "Uh, that's nothing. It will go away." I feel that I was a very good mother, but not over protective. I have never told my children my life. They didn't want to hear it. My children don't want to hear about the Holocaust, and I try to not to talk to them. I do

speak to high school children in Israel and here. But my own children would like to see a normal mother and the Israeli children don't think that the Holocaust was such a great heroism. I always thought that I was a great hero, but in Israel, no, they don't want to know that their mother was once hungry, that their mother was once saw the most terrible rape. They don't want to hear that. So, to tell a life of 6 years to someone like you is very difficult. It's very difficult to tell you the story from day 1 til the end, chronologically, because (a) there are many things which I don't remember and many things which I don't want to remember. But I understand that one has to talk. If I am almost the youngest, then probably soon you won't have anyone to talk. But I don't think that it's possible or feasible or you name it, to go back to everyday life and I see my 7 year old grandchild. The other day I called her up and she said, "Bring me a pair of glasses with birds on it." You know, I am talking to me. I said _____, what do you want? She said, "Grandmother, you have to bring me a pair of glasses, American glasses, with birds on it." 7 years old! And I said to myself, "How wonderful it is to be 7 years old and to want glasses with birds." And while talking to you I say to myself, "What did I want when I was 7 years old." And therefore it is so very difficult for me to put it together, you know, and to say, well, on Sunday, I did this, on Monday, I did this, and year after year. It wouldn't be even real, because I don't remember, I don't want to remember. I want the Holocaust behind me. I have lived, since 1952 that I married, I lived a very normal life, a very happy person. I said yes to talk, because I feel it is important. I try to be real, but how real can one be in telling a story that I was hungry, when today I am on a diet. Really!

Q: Can you pick up on particular incidences such as the mass rape that you witnessed?

A: Yes, we were punished in Stutthof for, I still had my mother and sister then, and then we were punished for 3 women escaped the camp. You know, I was in Auschwitz lately, and I saw the wires, the electric wires, and it was a flashback to this moment. I don't understand how they escaped. I really don't because the electric wires were not always on, but when they saw someone very near or when they saw someone that wants to touch them, they put it on and they were dead. Now, how those three women escaped electric wires, I don't know. But they did. They couldn't find them, and we were punished, 12 hours naked in cold weather, and additional punishment was they took out 4 or 5 and I don't remember how many women, and in front of all the women that we stood in a row, you know, they raped in a rape that I have never read or seen it, not in a movie and not on the television, and certainly you can say that we have a terrible television with all kinds of stories. And to see those young women raped by the men there with sticks, and my mother was near me and she took her hand and put on my eyes, I shouldn't see for the first time sexual intercourse. I have never seen sexual intercourse. I remember in my home the bedroom of my parents was far away from my room. I have never heard anything. I have never seen anything. And I was too small child. I never dated. This was not the ages of, I wasn't of the age to date. So to see that, I understand that my mother didn't want me to see this. Why did she hope that I will be alive and probably she thought if I see it, maybe I will be shy of men or whatever. But the men, the Germans saw what she did with her hand, and took her out of the row, and beat her up so that all her teeth

fell out, the front teeth fell out. To tell you, when I married I am so, I am honest to tell you I have never even thought about this scene. When I first started to have sexual intercourse with a man, it never took me back there to that scene. I wished my mother would have known it. This is probably my strong nature that I have. I know how to disconnect myself, and when I started to date my husband, he was my first date, and my husband, I felt loved and I loved, and I didn't feel like thinking about what happened so many years ago. As I say, I wish she should have known it, that I became a normal person. In any way normal, except in the many things that I enjoy life maybe more powerful than all of you and that kind of a feeling of "Where were you?" And I don't want to put any guilt on anyone, especially I talk to people who weren't even born when I talk to them, as probably you, yourself, but I do ask the question again and again and again, "Where were you? Why did you let me rot there?" And that is what is in my life, but I try to do the best I can.

Q: Are there any other particular incidences that are vivid memories for you that you would like to share.

A: Yah, we were once put in a train going back and forth 3 days, 3 nights and, you know, they filled up the box car to the maximum, closed the windows and the doors, and to go 3 days and 3 nights without having a bathroom, you can imagine, without food, you can imagine what happened there. And I was very small and I was pushed out from my small space that they got and all of a sudden nobody wanted to give me back my little space. And so I was thrown from one corner to another. I was all bruised up, and then all of a sudden after being so tired and crying, I sat on someone and this person did not say anything. So I was sitting and sitting and sitting and I was so grateful. I remember vividly that I did speak to that person all the time until I fell asleep and then I wanted, when they opened the door, I wanted to say thank you for letting me rest finally, after being thrown from one corner to another, and that person was dead. To see those eyes, you know, you turn around and you say, "Gencuie(ph), which means in Polish, "Thank You," and those two big eyes, that was a scene which is, I also don't forget so easy. And there were many things that, many things in my life that I could talk about, but

Q: The more things that you can share, the better.

A: Do I want to share everything? This is the question. Do I want to share everything I know or everything? Well, I don't think that I do want to say everything. Not because I don't want others to know, but I want to be happy and yesterday, I cried and the day before, I cried. Today I cry. Usually when I live in Israel, I don't. I don't talk Holocaust. It is, I don't! I live a very normal life, but I understand you need to show the world that it was true. I am sure that there were people that will hear my voice will say, "Well, she has a vivid imagination." Some people will not believe it, as today some people don't believe it. I mean not everybody believes it. But what could I tell you more? I loved my sister very much. She was very good to me. It's difficult. It's difficult to talk about the Holocaust. Really! It's a tough topic to talk, especially when I really am a very happy person. I am. I

am extremely happy person. Even as a widow, I must say. I had wonderful 26 years, and I repeat it because it was given to be as a present. Others didn't have it. Not my sister, not all my family, not my mother, not my father, and I have to be grateful that I was chosen by God, or I don't know. It's a philosophical statement, by God or not by God, I was chosen to be alive and to enjoy life. So I do want to enjoy life very much.

Q: Dora, if we take a little break at this point, do you think you might be able to go back to Stutthof and give us a little more?

A: Fine. Okay.

Q: They are suggesting you mentioned that you were alone, and when we come back we can talk about being alone, if there were other people there that you knew, how people interacted with one another, things like that, not only the degradation, but perhaps the way people reached out and touched one another. We realize that this is very difficult for you, but it is so important to have it though.

A: Do you have a tissue?

Q: Yes. I certainly do.

A: I wasn't ready for this crying, so I didn't take a tissue with me.

Q: Go back to Stutthof. Tell me what you can. Ready?

A: You are asking me about Stutthof. Now Stutthof was the last phase of my life under the Nazis. You have to remember that I was already very, very down. I had flacktiphus (ph) which is, means typhoid with spots. I had typhoid which means diarrhea. My sister was not there anymore. I was all alone. People did not talk to me.

Q: How old were you?

A: Well, I was 12. I was 13 when I was liberated. You see even the age when I tell you, it is an assumption that I was 12 or 13. I, you know, because I really didn't know how old I was. I remembered only that I was born in the 30s, on 1st of February. That I remember, because I remember the birthday parties that were given to me. But when I was in the hospital after I got my bullets, they asked me, "How old are you?" And I said, "I don't know." And why didn't I know? Because when I had my mother still, when they were cleaning up the concentration camp from children, she would say to me, "If the Germans catch you, tell that you are 15, 15, 16." When we would go away from the camp, she would say, "Go and ask this Germans for a piece of bread. Tell him that you are a little girl of 10. Of 9. Of 8." It went on and off. Once I was older because she was afraid that I would die if I say that, if they find out that my real age, and when she wanted me to beg for a piece of bread, she understood that maybe they would have some pity on a smaller

child. So when I woke up after 3 days without conscious because I lost a lot of blood, being already on the verge of dying because I had typhoid and no food, no water, for the last time before the Russian entered. I woke up in a hospital in a wide bed with infusion here, infusion there, a cast, and they asked me how old I am and I said, "I don't know." I really didn't know. And piece by piece I have, when I came to Israel, and I found my brother and I found an Aunt that was in Siberia. She is 85 years old now, and she was telling me I was born in 32. She remembers it, but I said, I don't care if I was born in 31, 32, or 33. It was in the 30s. So I was very small, and I was probably the only child already at the last year that was left in Stutthof. Or maybe there were, but its 100,000 people. I knew only my barrack, or maybe the second barrack. Also, I didn't know people by name. Nobody was interested in me, and I wasn't interested in them. It was a gray life of getting up at very early in the morning and then thy had appell(ph) which means you had, they had to count you. We all, as you see, we don't have the number, but we had the number, Stutthof a number of, the iron number on a chain, which you wore all day long and all night long. And they never called you by name. They called you by number. What should people, grownup people that were hungry and were afraid, talk to a child that was not their family. Anyhow they knew that I am going to die because if the Germans will come and clean up from unwanted people, I will be the first one to go. So to say like today when you see a child on the street and this child has pain or something or a child lost his way, you ask, "Little girl or little boy, where do you want to go." Many times when I see a child crossing the street, "I say don't cross even when is green. Keep my hand." I'll cross the child. That was not in the camp. It wasn't! And I understand why. Because everybody was afraid and frightened and hungry and thirsty and worked out and beaten up and so, the psychology was not the place in concentration camps. Psychology today, everybody today runs to the psychologist if he has the slightest problem. We didn't have psychologists. And people, even if they knew about psychology, which probably some knew, what, they were, we were not human beings.

Q: What made you keep going in Stutthof after your mother and sister were gone?

A: I don't know if it is that I have very strong nature that I did want to survive. But those are words of today. I don't know why was I so strong. But I am a very strong person, and I remember, I have a diary so I take it out from the diary what I have written in 1945, 6, 7 when I was in the hospital, that when I felt hungry, really hungry to an extent that I tried, that I couldn't even think about anything else, I was thinking about the food which once upon a time I tasted. Bananas and oranges and chocolate. And I really felt that in the mouth, so that kept me. The fantasy! I developed probably a very big fantasy. I talked to myself. Today, even, sometimes I just talk to myself. I tell myself stories. And I am a very strong natured person. When my husband died, at the cemetery there was a very big funeral. He was a doctor. In the war, he was a high ranking officer, and we had lots of friends. Jews, non-Jews, Arabs. He had an office in Nazareth, and they loved him, so the funeral was thousands of people. The police came, and here a Jewish funeral in Israel is not very nice to look at. And the moment that they put the body in the hearse, I felt that I am going to faint and I don't like people to see me, not crying and not, I don't like

anybody to pity me. There's nothing to pity at, so I said to myself, "How can I overcome this feeling of despair." And I said, "Well, I was married 26 years, wonderful life. I'll have another 26 of wonderful life." And that kept me of not fainting. And I make this analogy because probably even as a child I was the same one. It's my nature. I did not let myself die. Like people, I am sure that my mother, not only from hunger she died, as from saying, "I don't want anymore to live. There is nothing to live for." I don't have that kind of a nature. I was 6,3 years pneumothorax, pneumothorax is every 8 days they put you a needle, death sick, in your lung, and put air. It is a terrible, painful thing. And every 8 days I said to myself, "Oh, again, it's the pain." But I over came that. My nature is very strong, and I feel that has to do a lot why I survived and others didn't because let's face it, not everybody died in the gas chamber, not everybody died from bullets, not everybody died from beaten up, or from hunger. Many, many died from not wanting to live anymore. And I always wanted to live. Always! And I feel today when I reason to myself, "Why me, and 1,500,000 children not?" Is because I am a tremendous strong character. I have it in me. I over come hunger. I over come pain. For me to say to somebody will tell you, "You have to go to have an operation tomorrow." It's nothing! I went through four operations. Nothing!

Q: Can you describe the last day in the camp. What it was like?

A: The last day? Oh, we knew that the war is coming to end. That even I knew. But we knew because they were saying that the tanks, that they hear the roaring of the tanks of the battle. And, uh, I was lying in the barrack. We didn't get water. I was very sick, very sick. When they weighed me, I was 18 kilo. I don't know how much it is in pounds, but 18 kilo is very little, is very little. No hair. I had all stains on my body. I still have a few left. And the last day I did hear of lot of "Sh'ma Yisrael, Adonai elohenu..." And I heard that people were praying because it was the end. And then, in the morning, people were hopeful. But in the morning, two Germans came with a machine gun and we heard that they were already in the barracks, in the other barracks. We heard the screaming. And I was lying on my tummy, and I got the two bullets in my back. I have quite a few holes on my back. I never did a plastic surgery on it. Never disturbed me. But, uh, and then I fainted. The last thing which I knew is that, and I remember it because I wrote it also in the diary, that from here til here, it's over. I don't have, I have only half a body because the fire of the bullets, you feel such a hot, such a heat, and you faint. You don't, you lose your conscious. I lost a lot of blood, and they told me that I was lying there 2 hours or something like that and the first tanks came in and with every battalion comes a field hospital, and male nurses came and they found this little girl still alive. So they took me in, into the hospital and I was operated, the first bullet was taken out. And they thought it is only one bullet and as it was broke and everything, they put me in a cast, but that was a terrible mistake, because I got an infection and they had to take out the cast and operate again to find, they knew already, that there must be a foreign body inside, with such a terrible infection. But it was very painful to lie in a cast which was full with infection, terrible painful. But here again, I wanted to live, and I survived that too. It wasn't very easy to live 3 years in a sanitorium. First was the Nuns. I didn't speak Italian. Not a word

Italian. And they knew it. Every night, I took a piece of bread and a potato, put it under the pillow. Maybe tomorrow there won't be food. Every night they took it away in the morning, and every night I put back from the dinner a piece of bread and a potato. So to say that I was a total, normal person when the war was over, probably not if this was my daily routine of hiding a piece of bread. But afterwards, I got used to, I started to speak Italian. I was the only child in the sanitorium. The only child! This, in my life, the problem is that I never had a childhood. Wherever I was, I was the only child.

Q: What sanitarium was this?

A: Grupino. It was an Italian, you know 45 years ago, tuberculosis was an illness that was contagious. You never went out from there. Therefore, the Nuns were there because they were so committed. They were not afraid to get the illness. But then a Jewish hospital was opened, and so they transferred me to there. But even there, I was the only child. There were 2 or 3 17 or 18 year old, but I was the only child wherever I went I was the only child. It shows you only that the number of the 1,500,000 is so real, because today wherever I go, and I say I am a Holocaust survivor, and they say, "How old were you?" And I say, "7 when I started." They say, "No, it's impossible." I don't know how many Holocaust survivors you met, but I have met at The Gathering in Israel, I was the youngest. The NBC reporter took me from, aside and said, "Can I speak to you as a second generation?" And I talked to him, and I said what do you say, you look so young. He said I am the first cast. Because lately when we gathered in Jerusalem, the people were old people. I felt like I was again the youngest.

Q: In Stutthof, did you work? Was it slave labor or did you just kind of stay in the barrack?

A: Some days we worked, and some days we stayed in the barracks. Work, what it is. You didn't go out to work. Stutthof did not go out to work. We worked, some women probably worked in cleaning up and some in ironing for the Germans and some in there, they wants, the labor was to carry stones from one corner to another, cement, cleaning up, you know, the asphalt. No, we did not work, productive work like going out in an ammunition or in a painting factory or whatever. I didn't.

Q: What about in Kaiserwald?

A: Kaiserwald was a transfer, uh, camp. It was not, I don't know if in Kaiserwald, people lived more than for 2 or 3 or 4 weeks. It was like from Kaiserwald, they were sent to Stutthof to Dinenwerke, whatever. Kaiserwald was in Riga. I have never seen Riga. But Kaiserwald is in Riga.

Q: How did you move from Kaiserwald?

A: Trains. By trains, yah. Always trains, always trains.

Q: Can you describe the transport? Was there a lot of people?

A: A lot of people in one. But there were trains just for suffering like I did describe to you. And there were trains that they transported you from one place to another. Those trains, they transported you from one place to another, the window was open. So there was light in, and they did stop. They did stop to take you out to do whatever you had to do. Those trains which I described to you, I was once, those were just back and forth for some, no destination. It's just another way of making you suffer. Look, you ask me again and again about Stutthof. It was a miserable, daily life. You know, uh, many Holocaust survivors say that there was no greenery. I recently was, I was in Auschwitz, and I saw around there was green grass. Trees! Why didn't we see that. It seems to me that all they have burned the grass, or, I don't know, but we never saw any greenery. There was always grayness. The barrack was gray. The cot was gray. Everything was gray. Today is around there, nature makes it when it's raining and sunshine, there is growing grass somewhere. We never saw grass. We never saw any greenery. No flowers! Sometimes blue skies, when the sky was blue, was blue. I don't know if we noticed the sky as is blue.

Q: Was there any attempt on the part of the inmates to mark the passage of time either secular time or Jewish holidays?

A: Maybe there was, but not with me. Nobody taught me anything. Nobody taught me about religion. Nobody taught me about Jewishness. Nobody told me why, why are we in concentration camp? No. I have no memory of somebody saying, "Come little girl, I'll teach you how much is 2 and 2," or "Tell me about your, the name of your doll." I don't remember anybody asking me that. No. But maybe it's my own story. Maybe other grownup, more children, or, yes, when I had my sister, we did talk. We fantasized. She was very, she was so good to me. But once I was alone, but I think everybody was alone. Maybe there were grownup people that had friends. I was even alone sleeping in this gray, there were another 3, 4 women, but nobody covered me with a blanket or gave me a kiss or whatever. I don't remember ever, ever getting any love in Stutthof. And I don't know why should they if everybody was so afraid that the next day they'll all take them to the hospital which they made some kind of, I have heard, that they made all kinds of things in the hospital. I was never, never in the hospital there. And sometimes I have seen coming back from a barrack, from another barrack and the people had, and the woman had head blue, and they were crying. So what should I have told. Today when somebody is crying, I ask, "why do you cry?" But I didn't ask even why do you cry. Because everybody was crying sometimes. I was crying sometimes too. Was a very lonely life in Stutthof. Very lonely! It was the end. Don't forget that that was already 44. It's not like 39, 40, 41, 42, where you still had the hope that some miracle mishirhole(ph) or the Messiah will come. 44, I don't believe that people had any hope of surviving. I don't believe it. You just were there saying, "When is my, it's me that will go to the gas chamber?" And every day, you saw those, the groups of people going in and never coming back. I didn't count them. I don't know, but they never came back. And if someone that knew you was asleep and she didn't come back, I wasn't explained why

didn't she come back, and I wasn't, must tell you, I wasn't even interested too ask, "Where is she?" I wasn't intelligent enough, maybe, to ask, "Where is this person that the other night was sleeping near me?" I was so small. Take my own grandchild, 7. What does she interested in? I was not different than a 10 year old child. I speak to 10 and 9 year old children. I listen to their questions, and they live already in a life where Holocaust has happened, where they are exposed to brutality and the television. Your television is very brutal. And I was not exposed to that. There was no television in those times. I hardly could read. So I couldn't even read terrible things. So, a lonely life.

Q: I'd like to ask you once more if there are any particular incidences that stand out in your mind that you would like to have recorded on this tape.

A: I would like to say to the women and mothers that will listen to me that the love of a Jewish mother or any other mother, I don't know, I am Jewish so I am speaking about the Jewish mother, was so strong that one day, you know, that tracks would always come to clean up the concentration camp from old, sick, invalids, and children, and my mother always managed to save me. And one day, she didn't hear the whistle of the tracks and it was too late, and as you know we didn't have any bathrooms, but we had pits where we did what we had to do. And in despair, she took the little girl and she threw me there inside, praying to God that it wasn't deeper than I, my height, and I was standing there til here til the tracks went away, and she came out and took me out. There was no hot water, and she washed me with cold water. Didn't have any hair, so it wasn't so terrible. But the smell couldn't come out from me, and people didn't like to sit near me. I remember ___, "Get away, take away, that smelly child." That I remember very vividly, and I am telling it to those people, to those women that have children and that will listen, that the love of a mother, and she did not really know if she could take out me alive, because if it would have been fuller, I would have been drown in that, but I did stand til here, could still breath. Eh, I don't know if people, even that will listen to my story, if they comprehend what happened in the Holocaust. I don't know, because I, myself, when I am talking to you, I ask myself, "Do you really comprehend what went there?" Because I think that the two people that are sitting here as gentlemen, and you don't. You don't! You have never heard it. You have never seen it. And I hope that you will never, never feel it. That to tell a story like that 45 years later, that a mother throws the child from desperation into a pit and thinks, "Well, maybe she'll drown and maybe not." I don't think that you understand it, because I don't understand it either. I don't understand it. It's difficult to talk about it. I hope other people will learn a lesson from it, but it's unheard what, what happened there. It's unheard. It was never in the history, and nobody can convince me there was anything like it in the history of humankind. We had wars, we had pogroms, we had Armenian people, we had Biafra--you name it. But systematically kill people in the way like the Germans did, and the number and the number. When I think about it, that uh a earthquake takes 400 people and the whole world is shocked. We send everything possible to save the people, to help them; and 1,500,000 kids, like myself, and nobody send anything, and nobody did anything. I cannot, and will not ever, 'til I live, understand what happened. What happened with the world? And I think it's important

that people hear you. I spoken in Northshore, in Salem school to 105 children. Not even one Jewish child was there in the classroom. Was in the gym. There were mostly blacks, Puerto Ricans--American children. And I talked to them about the Holocaust, and told them about some of the stories. And the children just were quiet, and some had tears in their eyes. And one child, black child, asked me--such a clever little boy--asked me, "Mrs. Roth, can I ask you a question?" And he says, "Are you angry?" I said, "How can I explain that?" I said, "Yes, and No. I am angry and not angry. Angry that nobody did anything. Not angry because I do have that luck that I am telling you this story." So I shouldn't be totally angry. And it's so important, in my opinion, to really...to tell that story to the children. Because uh they will learn from it, the lesson. How much, I don't know. The world is very, the world is very brutal, still, but maybe they'll learn it from that.

Q: Thank you very much.

A: Thank you. Thank you, too. All of you that. And I am sorry that I don't like to cry. There is nothing to cry, really, but it's difficult to go back.

Conclusion of Interview