

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Frida Wallenstein
November 1, 1990
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PREFACE

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FRIDA WALLENSTEIN

November 1, 1990

Question: Would you tell me your name please and where you were born?

Answer: Frida Wallenstein, and I was born in Czecho...in what was at the time Czechoslovakia, in a small town called Selo-Solotvina (ph).

Question: Tell me a little bit about your life as a child.

Answer: My family moved from Czechoslovakia to Belgium when I was about two and a half years old. I had a sister who was also born in Czechoslovakia. My parents were working people and my little sister was born in the Liege (ph), Belgium, where we lived until I came to the States.

Question: And can you describe your life as a child?

Answer: We had wonderful parents who cared for their children, protected us, did everything to educate us, and until the war ca...until the war came, we we had a very close-knit family.

Question: Was this a very Jewish family?

Answer: Yes. My...my uh (cough) both my parents came from orthodox, very orthodox background. My father didn't want...did not want to keep it but my mother was...kept...liked to keep the orthodox but we lived in a city...Liege did not have a large Jewish uh community. We had a synagogue. We had a haider (ph). I went to haider and I learned to uh to to read Hebrew. I uh also had private tutors to teach me to read and write Yiddish. I used to read and write fluently in Yiddish, but the the...there was one kosher butcher and because of the life style in Belgium, the kosher laws as I grew up were not kept and especially, of course, during the war and during the years hiding. So I had forgotten about the kosher uh laws until I came to the States to live with my aunt, but my parents both came from an orthodox family. We went to services during the high holy days and I was not bar mitzvah because the orthodox Jews did not, but we assimilated more...we were Jewish but could not keep the strict kosher laws because Liege did not have enough of a Jewish population to ke...to be able to keep up like with the kosher meats and things like that. And the Belgium cook with butter the same as the French but my mother could never do it. She did stay with no cooking with butter...meat with butter...she could never mix it. We did, but we didn't, and for instance we have a lot of shrimp, a lot of seafood and that was never brought into our home, never, never. We did keep kosher.

Question: In the terms of the social environment at the time, what was life like for Jews?

Answer: Did not feel Jewish. Did not feel any different. I remember going to school during Passover with matzos because we did not eat bread, but I did not feel different from any of the other uh children who...because Belgium is Catholic, what Catholic there were. There was only one girl I remember going to school with as a Jewish girl and my sisters who followed after me,

but there was nothing ever brought up or mentioned or named as Jewish we were known. There were a lot of Polish people in Belgium, and they could never associate us as being Czech...uh Czechoslovakian. They referred to my mother as the Polish tailor, and my mother didn't...never at no time was anything or any reference made to the fact that we were Jewish. Never. was never made made to feel different. I'm...or I did not feel different or separate because I was Jewish...no. Never.

Question: Did you have non-Jewish friends and...?

Answer: All my friends, all my school friends except this one girl, and I was not friendly...uh she did not become a close friend of mine until I went into high school. In grade school all my school friends were Catholic. There was no two ways about it, because there were not enough Jewish families to have somebody of your age be in the same class. And we kept...uh when St. Nicholas Day came, we went along with the children. When the Easter egg hunt came along, we went along. We went Easter egg hunting. All my friends were Catholic. I lived across the street from the church and every time you went by, you went like this, and I went the same because all my friends were. My mother never stopped me. I knew I was Jewish but you follow along with the children, but I knew I was Jewish.

Question: Can you remember what happened when the war came?

Answer: Yes I do. Germans came in and for two years we stayed at home. We continued living under war conditions...rations. Uh we went to school and uh we lived uh under occu...you know, occupation, the same as everyone else and in two years, exactly two years later, then we were uh as Jews...then we started, the Germans started with the Jews in in at least Liege. I don't know what other part of Belgium did. The first thing was, no rad...the Jews were not allowed to have radios. We were not allowed to go to school. We had to register as Jews and that meant that we took identification cards to uh the Foreign Ministry and they stamped a big red stamp on it, on the inside that said Juda (ph), and we had to wear the uh ____ David on the chest. As a matter of fact uh I remember distinctly the students from the colleges some things and I don't know if mocking is the right term, used to wear them, the Star of David, and they made bonfires in mockery of the Jewish star, and uh I don't know...it was a matter of days or a week, they...there were some young people who had to go to a certain area and report as Jews and they had to go with clothing, with their with their ration stamps and clothing and food and they were young teenagers, two of my very close friends uh that I was going to high school with. The one I had gone to grade school also had to go. I was fifteen. They were about fourteen. They were just a little bit younger than I am, and the families let them go because no one knew, no one had any idea what the reason was, why, what for. We knew in Belgium about the uh Jews escaping from Germany. A lot of them ended up in Bel...in uh Belgium, but no one knew what what was happening, so they went, and I don't know if it was a week later, ten days later or a few days later, they called men of certain ages and my father was called to go to, supposedly to Dunkirk (ph) to build up fortifications.

Question: _____?

Answer: And my father was called and I can see him...it was a Saturday and we lived upstairs of a cafe in an apartment. My father came up the stairway. We had just finished cleaning. The door was open. He had his hair shaven, and my mother said where are you going? He says I'm going to report because if I do they promise not to touch the families. And my mother said, I don't trust them. And it was a matter of...I think all the Jews, and I'm talking Liege...now realized something was wrong, that we were being deported and everybody went panicking. Everybody went into going to hiding and...

Question: Let's go back just a moment. When...this is now two years after the start of the war...

Answer: After the start of the war...

Question: Go back to the very start? How did you feel when things began to change? What happened in your life?

Answer: I I I don't...

Question: Do you remember?

Answer: You mean when we went into...when they started with...?

Question: No. When the war just began...what was it like for you?

Answer: What was it like? We had...my parents were were wonderful. I mean everybody did the black market like to have food and things, and my parents did everything. We did not feel...oh, I remember my mother was afraid for me because she remembered the Kosacks (ph), you know, raping, and I was going on...let's see...I was going on fourteen and she was afraid for me, but the the Germans...someone asked me just not long ago if the Germans did anything like to rape a woman. Germans, and I'm talking Liege...probably the whole Belgium, I'm not sure...were not allowed to approach a civilian on the streets. They had houses, prostitution homes, reserved for soldiers. They never never touched anyone on the streets, and I think, if I remember, this was done for propaganda purposes to show how good the Germans were, that they were not our enemies, but they never never touched a woman. Belgium had food. Anything we had...coffee, we used to roast coffee after four years of war, and we had to close the windows because the coffee smelled when you roasted it. We had rice...everything found its way on black market. My father, before we went into hiding, used to get on his bicycle and go and get, you know, the carp is not the same as the American carp. It's clean. And he would sell that on the market because that was not rationed. They would...he would go to the farmers and sometimes like bring eggs because that was highly rationed. Now the farmers had quotas to turn in depending on the size of their farms, whether it was butter or eggs, so what they used to do is they used to be quote, robbed. Somebody came during the night or early in the morning and they were robbed, and all of that found its way on the black market, so as far as where we were in Belgium, we had food. We never went hungry. Never. Clothing...it's not the way of life here. You know, you bought a dress and you wore it until you outgrew it and then it went down to your younger sister and it was passed down. My my mother had been a man's tailor, so whatever pieces of fabric were left around, we managed to scrounge, and we wore the same things over

and over, but we had clothes and for money you could buy and it's hard to explain. My parents were honest people but anyone who understands war situation knows that if you want to survive in an occupied country, you do black markets. In other words, there were ration stamps. I was...never had money floating in my hands as much as...that's before we went into hiding...this is the first two years of war. The ration stamps were like like postage stamps and they used to make false ones. They used to duplicate them, like making fake money and it used to find its way on the black market, and that's what my father did and I don't know where he got his...he did not produce them. I don't who produced them, but we...my father used to buy them, get them and sell them and make money that way, and then wherever you could get either farm produce or I don't remember meat but I remember distinctly fish and eggs, whatever, and especially the stamps so I was old enough that if a customer came and wanted stamps, you see, and you could tell they were fake. But remember that the civilian...I mean Germans did not occupy everything and besides...they called them Alexis (ph) patrol Germans...they were all...everybody had to because you had a pad of butter a month as a ration. I learned to drink coffee without sugar for that reason, because my mother saved it to make jellies and things and to this day I don't drink coffee with sugar for for that reason, but anything you wanted except bananas. Fresh fruit, because Belgium had Belgium Congo and you could find on black market. So we ate and there was uh, you

know, I I remember the first German. We were petrified of them, you know, but the Germans were not all over. The country was run by Belgium civilians, so you didn't even see them that much. It's just that we had a uh a concern (ph) very close by with...a block, a block and a half of where I lived, so you did see more of the soldiers than maybe if you lived in an area where the concern (ph) was not close by, but otherwise it was all run and all occupied by by civilians, by by the Belgians, so the first two years uh there was noth...I did not...if I think back, besides seeing the first Germans and clinging to my mother, uh you know, you saw them coming with their rifles and as much as we could still comprehend uh once we got going I did not feel...there was no persecution. There was nothing. We continued to go to school, so there was nothing to make us feel...I think my parents sort of protected us to to to what really could be. I don't know, but the brunt of it was on my parents because they had gone through World War I with the, you know, the Kosacks and they remembered but we didn't.

Question: ____the start of the war, those first few years, being Jewish...

Answer: Absolutely not. It had...there was no difference. We were, we were the same as the Catholics because it's predominantly Catholic. I just remember maybe there were Protestants in school, but even Catholic religion was taught in the public schools. Absolutely nothing. No idea that it would...that there would be...I did not comprehend at the time, but I know that when the Germans invaded Poland and my mother, who I'm sure was very smart, wanted to come to the to the United States, and we had one aunt, her sister, the only one, in Cleveland, so I ended up in Cleveland, but it didn't work out. I won't go into it because...but uh and we knew of the, for instance, the Kristallnacht. I did not comprehend it. You have to remember that I was much younger and children were not, didn't have television like here today so we did not comprehend the full meaning of it. We knew the German Jews were persecuted because German Jews came into Belgium in running away from Germany and we had German Jews there. I personally as a young girl did not come in contact with other young girls. Whether adults came or they mainly maybe went to Antwerp or Brussels...Liege is not a cosmopolitan city where uh, you know, uh

uh people from other countries came. You know, uh in the capital city, your port...but I did not have any contacts that I remember with anyone who came out of Germany or...I think there may...probably most of them were German, not even Austrian...I think Ger...I know Germans came in but I did not have any contact with them. I did not know of any of them.

Question: When and how did things begin to change?

Answer: When we had to report as Jews. There was no school, no...we went...no school, no radios. We had to register as Jews and then they started deporting only the young people and I don't know if they were boys. For some reason or other I...these two friends of mine (coughing) ...excuse me...(coughing)...had to go and then when they called my father, that's when he went in to

turn to this Catholic family who was very staunch. They had a son who was Trappist monk as a matter of fact, and he was in the country, knew of the house, rented the house for us for six months, and we moved there. There were three rooms upstairs, two rooms downstairs. We had outdoor facilities. My father grew a garden, a big vegetable garden. He helped the farmers and we used to go down to the farmer to get fresh milk. I can still taste the milk. I couldn't drink it today. It was just drained from the uh the cheesecloth that they used to strain it. We burned wood and then this uh couple came to hide with us. I don't know if it was a month or two after we went into hiding. She had worked for my parents uh as a uh as a tail...in tailoring. He was a friend of the family who also, who had come from Czechoslovakia. He had joined us because we were from Czechoslovakia and they got married, and I don't know how they found out, but they knew where we were and they joined us so we had my parents, and I was the oldest of three...my two sisters...and then we had a cousin who was eight years old at the time whose mother had died many years before when he was a young child whose father left him when the Germans started with the Jews. He had remarried and the stepmother brought him to us, so we had four in our family, and then Rochelle (ph) and her husband and the baby who was not quite a year old. They shared a room. My parents had a room and I don't remember where my little cousin slept, but the three of us slept in one room and we had to go to the stream to get water and to heat the water. We had to use outdoor facilities and we had woods behind the house and farmland in front of us. During the weed-cutting season we used to go behind the farmers when they cut the weeds and we called it in French _____...you follow the the farmers and you pick the weeds that is left behind. We put them in big burlap sacks, went down to the flour mills and then we used to...my mother used to prepare the bread and then take them to the farmers and bake them in the outdoor oven. If you ever tasted...yes...bread baked in wooden ovens and uh we used to get...we had identification. Our names were changed from...my maiden name was Adler and Frida is a German name...it's a foreign name, and my name was changed to Fernand Albert (ph)...in English it's pronounced Albert, and my middle sister, my little sister kept the same name but my little cousin was Zeigmund which is typically a German name. His father was from Czechoslovakia, so we changed it to Simone (ph), which is Simon in English, and I remember we told him if you ever want to see your father, your name is Simone Adler and you're not to tell anyone. Of course, his father made it. He didn't. And it took no time at all for the Catholics around the villages to know we were Jewish but no one, no one ever...I mean I remember one time the farmers came because the Germans were looking for I don't know what and we went into the woods and because the farmers warned us. My sister and I used to go into the city everyday to get our ration stamps on our real names and one time the citizens who were handing

out the ration stamps...the Germans were looking for something or other, and they put us in the back of the old school until the Germans disappeared and then I don't know exactly how...before the Germans uh came to arrest the family and I think...I can't...don't know how my parents found out. It may be the same person who made out the false ID papers for us...found a place for me to go into the city and I became a maid. It was a woman. She was from Alsace-Lorraine (ph). She was a widow to a coal mining engineer and she had a son who was at that time forty years old who was a gynecologist and babies were delivered at home in those days and he received patients in his home two afternoons a week and it was a wealthy home which means they had a live-in maid and someone who came three times a week. I went in. They knew I was Jewish. I went in and the two...the day woman left, so I did the work of two women. I scrubbed white marble halls. I scrubbed Persian rugs. I scrubbed...I mean the wood...I don't know what the wood is called in English...it was...and the woman used to go, you know, this is coal furnaces, and she used to go like this to make sure there was no dust. I had...she did the cooking and then when he used to come in, they used to have a cocktail because this is typical French way of living and relaxing. When he went to deliver a baby, you know, they went hours before and when dinner...when they were ready for dinner they rang a bell, and I served and then I went into the kitchen and I ate my dinner and then if uh...you know the French eat everything on a different dish, and I did the dishes, not in a dishwasher, but we had...they were wealthy enough to have water that was heated not in the same manner as here but the water was...you didn't have to heat it on the stove. Also he received patients. I had to sterilize his instruments and I maintained a house, a three-floor house, and you have to appreciate how to clean Persian rugs. I mean not carpeting, her...we're back into Persian rugs. Parquet, uh parquet, the real parquet that I had to scrub with my feet and the big pads and I stayed there until my sister, my middle sister...my my sister Bertha was also placed in a doctor's home in the country for that purpose also and she was not feeling well and the doctor told her to go home to rest and that's when on a Sunday morning on May 5...I used to go home every other weekend on my bicycle. Traveled by bicycle. I used to go home uh over night. She...the lady of the house, the lady of the house allowed me to go home, but usually maids used to go home, get weekends off but she took advantage of my situation. I went home every other weekend, and I got a phone call that was messaged (ph), saying to me not to go home, and I got...I understood that the Germans had been at the house. Now to re-track...my father was ill and I...all I remember his eye was broken outside and like he had an ear infection, an eye infection. The country doctor treated him, sent him to the hospital and of course the hospital was in the city in Liege. He came to the hospital on Friday. My sister was supposed to come in and bring him shaving cream and soap for bathing...you did not get these things...they were black market, the good ones...and my sister never came in and I got word that...I understood the fam...the Germans came and the family and the other couple were picked up. Doctor Bastat (ph) told...where I was in hiding...managed to get my father released from the hospital, went to the hospital and my father and I got on a bus to go to the village to see what had happened and I'll never forget it. My father went on one end of the bus, me on the other end and he says if one of us gets picked up, we don't know the other one. I can see my father. If I would have been picked up, my father ignoring me. Then we saw the farmers and they told us that what they did is they went to...you know, this is this is a little village with little passage, little road, not even a road, leading to the house, and they brought the family from the house to the main road and they questioned my my mother and my mother said that these were not their children...her children, and they were there for her...their health, wh...which was common practice, because we came from coal-mining countries and a lot of

children from the schools were sent to the country, but they didn't take it and they asked where my father was and my little sister said in the hospital, and I understand the German slapped her for lying. This came from the farmers who were there when the Gestapo picked up my...the family and you know, all the people at five o'clock in the morning. Also, in between while in hiding, my two sisters and my cousin were placed in an orphanage which, of course, was Catholic but it was not working out for whatever reason it was...I don't know...I didn't get involved in these things, so they were in an orphanage for a while and then came home and the reason I went into become a maid and they tried with my little sister is for what exactly what happened is so you wouldn't be together if anything happened, and there was...I remember a man who worked in cutting the woods behind us who wanted to take my little cousin. My mother was afraid to let him go. She was afraid something would happen to him and nothing to us, so he was taken with my parents. My par...uh they were arrested May 5 at five o'clock in the morning by the Gestapo and we had (cough)...we have a citadel (ph) and it's like in the suburb of Liege that was unoccupied but the Germans occupied it and they gathered the Jews from Liege there and they stayed there until May, May 12th and then they were sent on to Maline (ph) which is a city between Brussels and Antwerp where they gathered the Jews from Belgium. While they were in the citadel with some packages, with whatever food and clothing or whatever was needed into the citadel and Rochelle (ph) who's the only one who survived told me that a German gave her milk through the bars every single day. There were some Germans who were helping people escape, get out of the citadel because the citadel also hol...held Belgium civilians who did underground for uh underground sabotage and my father tried to pay, because it was done for money, to have my mother and the children taken out of there but the Germans who were doing it were caught and were killed by the Germans, so that...yes...this is, this is for real. They were Germans. You have to realize not all Germans were Gestapos. Not all Germans were Nazis. There were Germans who helped. Whether they did it for money or because they cared I don't know, but I know my father had found out that it could be done and...but the Ger...these German soldiers who were helping, whether they were uh people who did sabotage or Jews, were killed, were shot, you know, by their own people. Said couldn't be done. We thought they would...this was, you have to realize, this is May of 1944. D-Day was June 6th. The Allied troops were bombing supposedly the railroads but they did not damage the railroads enough to stop the trains from going out, so they thought they would not be deported. Not only that, someone, some Catholic people found out when they were going out of Liege but they did not dare tell my father because my father went out of his mind, and my father tried everything which way he could to do something or to join them and then went on to Maline and I stayed with Monsieur Madame LeBare (ph) who they were going in between with correspondence. My aunt and uncle had lived there and then went to France when Jews went into hiding. Jewelry which was not jewelry with diamonds. There were gold so you could sell it to buy food, were brought out of the citadel to their homes and handed to us and I went to stay with them for just a few days but could not stay because he too, Monsieur LeBare was also in hiding and I went on to Brussels to be closer to Maline to be able to send care packages and I stayed with a Jewish man who had intermarried a non-Jewish woman. In Belgium when there was an inter-marriage, they did not touch the Jews and I spent the last few months of the war in Brussels, when I say in hiding...I walked the streets. I went to the library and read books. As a matter of fact I had surgery. I had my appendix out and I went into a Catholic hospital and I remember the Allied troops were bombing at the time, getting ready for D-Day, and I went in. I remember wearing a blue

nightgown and being on the elevator and Madame Freedman said to me, she said you have to be careful, you know, when you go under...these these were ether, you know...they put the mask on you. She says some people when they go under anesthetic, they talk and I went and I had my appendix out and the bombs were flying all over and I remember waking up and I can see the Virgin Mary on the ceiling and I kept saying in French, there's something I can't talk about. There's something I can't talk about. And I happened to be in a room with people who did not speak French. You know Belgium is bilingual. They spoke Flemish. They spoke...they didn't speak French, and I stayed there...you know, those were the days they kept you in the hospital for two weeks, and that's when D-Day had happened and the Allied troops came into Brussels in September and my father managed to get himself in jail, in a in a prison, Belgium prison, because...I don't know how he managed it but he said he used to go to help the the underground to fight. He used to go to the farmers and quote, rob them, to feed the underground people. Somehow or other...I don't know what he did...he got himself in jail, got himself a lawyer, and I went to the lawyer. I said you have my father released, I'll kill you. My father was in jail...I don't think he ever forgave me for it...the last three months of the war and I left Brussels and I decided to go home for to be home with my father for my 18th birthday, and my birthday's September 14. Got on a train, got as far as _____ which is halfway between Brussels and Liege and didn't realize because Brussels they just walked in...the British and the Canadians came in, and didn't realize they were still fighting on the outskirts of Liege, because it's the closest place to Germany. We had it when the Germans came in in reverse, and I stayed with Monsieur, Madame LeBare and got my father out of jail somehow. He was an alien. They were going to send him to Czechoslovakia, but everything was proven and I went to live with my father. We managed...we were bombed. We had the buzz bombs. A place to live was hard to get, so I went back with my father and people started coming out of the camps and coming home and we were hoping and some man and I don't remember his name...a Jew...came came out of the camp. My father was going to palm readers, to fortune tellers, everything, and this man told my father, don't keep hoping. I took the bodies out myself from the crematories. You have to realize that they went out when Hitler had the final...came up with the final solution and they went into Auschwitz on May 21 according to Rochelle. They left uh Belgium 19. Arrived on the 21 and they separated women and children and Rochelle's husband went on a march. Didn't make it. That's what she told me, and when they went in, somebody told her to hand the baby to my mother, and afterwards they told her she would never see the child. My mother was lost because my cousin was ten. My little sister was...let's see...I was going on eighteen, so my littler sister...six...eighteen...fourteen...I was told that my middle sister was given the option of either going to the women's camp or staying with my mother, and she choose to stay with mother. You have to realize they didn't know about the gas chambers, and they went in immediately. They did...were not choosed for experiments, and this was the final solution and they went in immediately. I didn't have the heart to ask Rochelle did they go in right away or the next day or anything, but that was the final solution and this man told him, he says don't...you know, that's what some of the people did is keep the bodies, so uh and then we made contact with my aunt in Cleveland and my father thought I would be better off coming to the States. And I left my father and came to Cleveland, and that's it.

Question: And that's it.

Answer: I think so. But we had...the Catholics...you have to realize the the people who would have been caught for making the false ID's were risking their lives if they had been caught, you know, doing it. Uh if you care to know, the reason the family was picked up is we had what they called the _____ and they were the people...I don't know if you can really call them pro-Germans. Probably most people worked for the Germans, and we had sabotage very very strong in Liege because of the ammunition...first of all because they hated the Germans...ammunition, rifles and I remember distinctly when an American plane was shot down and fell between two stacks of hay across from the house where we were in hiding, and we walked over. No bodies were found because probably the underground picked up...I don't know if it was one fli...pilot and the co-pilot. I have no idea. Nobody found anything and these people were helped. You also had a Briti...you know, you had the Belgian underground and I don't know if there was some infiltration coming from England or what and when my understanding was that if the _____ turned in like an underground or...they got paid for this. This was...that's my understanding. They did it for money. My...the family and the other couple were arrested on a Sunday. There were things...there were people arrested...I mean the Germans were doing a lot of...nobody knew who was doing what. On Thursday there were twin brothers...they were farmers across the way from where we were in hiding, who had been called to go to German, you see, and they didn't go. This was...and we're talking Catholics. They were picked up and I don't know if they also worked for the underground maybe to what extent...I don't know. They were picked up on Thursday, and whoever was doing it slipped...I don't know how but they found out who did it and the person who was doing it was killed, you know, was shot down for what he was doing, but with all the things that went on, my...our family was picked up. The two brothers, the twin brothers were picked up and then that one person...whether it was one...I know it was one. Whether he worked in conjunctions with others I couldn't tell you because I was not at home...was was shot down because of what he was doing.

Question: Did you see this happen?

Answer: No. No, no. I did not see it happen. You have to realize I was in Liege and I was running for my life too, especially at that time because the fam...you know, my parents were deported and I...for some reason the Gestapo did not believe my little sister. They did not go to the hospital so far as I know. My par...my father left the hospital right away that same Sunday and uh Madame _____, her son the doctor thought it would be better if I left, so because they were in trouble if they would have caught them with a Jew. Of course they could have denied knowing that I was Jewish because I was there as a as a maid. That was...you know, but it still...they could have been picked up and put in the citadel for torture and to make them talk, and I was prepared to go to Maline, uh to Brussels to be able to forward packages to the family, but they were only there for seven days and then deported, so...but this all came back from from the farmers, you know, who lived in the country. I mean this is all true.

Question: When you were in Liege, what were you aware of in terms of what was going on?

Answer: When I was in Liege...just held my breathe if the Germans...I remember the uh Madame _____ sent me to the dry cleaner. We had a river which is the main river which separated Liege from going towards France or from Germany. The bridge, the bridges were

dynamited even before the German invaded. They had ju...they had dynamited one of the bridges and when it was acts of sabotage, the Germans posted themselves on each side, and I remember picking up some dry cleaning and something had happened and they stopped me and they were...and I never never...I studied German also and I spoke Yiddish fluently...never opened my mouth when a German...I didn't want to let anything go. We were aware...we knew we were in hiding. It...it...it's hard to explain because I remember my mother used to say if we can only live to to tell about it, to talk about it. Even though I was going...I was just about sixteen when we went into hiding, you know, we're not the children of today. We didn't have television. We we were not world...wise like the children are today. My parents were fantastic parents in trying to protect us, took the brunt of it. We were aware. We told my little cousin if you ever want to see your father, you must not...your name is Simone Albert and nothing else, but I was a blond. The...I think the the help of of the farmers, the help of the people...we went on living. We ate. My health was fantastic. We did go, for instance, in between...someone told us about a priest in another village in the ____ which is the...he was hiding a Jewish family. As a matter of fact this young woman, this Rochelle who is in Israel now...her sister and her mother were there in that village that he was willing to help and I remember my mother and my two sisters...maybe my little cousin went...no, I think my mother and my sister...we got on the train and we went uh towards Mameur (ph) it was called and we went and we stayed at the priest's house and he was going to decide whether to let my sister or me or both of us stay and after we got off the train...(laughter).....alright and we, and he...it was interesting because he was helping Jews but on the other hand, he worked both ends at one time, and I want to say this very openly. I am not prejudiced. Catholics helped us to save, risked their lives to save our lives, but there's always a bad one, and this priest worked both ends. As a matter of fact, I think the underground took care of him eventually, if I remember correctly and we didn't stay. We went back, so we were aware but until you saw, until you saw the Germans...you know, it's like every day living. We learned to live with no water. We...my father made us play cards every night. We burned a kerosene lamp and that was...I remember we used to gripe but we played cards. There was nothing else to do. We played cards. But we went to the farmers. We went to the movies. We we walked...

Question: Is this in Liege?

Answer: No, when we were in hiding in the country.

Question: I've gotten confused now with the sequence.

Answer: Well, even when we were hiding, even when I was in Liege, when I was in Brussels, I walked the street. I walked the streets openly. If I would have been stopped for any reason...first of all I was a girl. I was...I was not in areas where sabotage went on or Germans went, so I walked...I walked the street like any other civilian, and in Brussels we didn't have...with Liege you had the river to cross, you see. In Liege you had to be careful because if any act of sabotage went on, because there was a lot there, the Germans posted themselves on each side of the bridge and you had to keep your fingers crossed you didn't look suspicious that they'd put you...picked you up, put you in the citadel for questioning.

Question: Were you ever accosted by Nazis at all?

Answer: No. What I remember before we went into hiding, you know, we had to have black drapes, no lights, and that was before we went into hiding, and I can see, I can hear the boots coming up the stairway, and the Gestapo came because they thought they saw light. The drapes were actually opaque black. You could not see a white drape with light because that meant signaling, you know, whatever, and to this day when I when I see boots...I mean I can see the German, but that was before we went into hiding. The only instance I remember even though that was not allowed is...I'm talking German soldier...I don't know...there were two, three walking together and we were walking with my mother. It was my sister and they stopped my mother for just a few minutes about something that was a no-no, and they let her go, but otherwise, other than the ordinary sabotage went on or anything that they stopped everybody, especially on either side of the river. No, I was never stopped.

Question: Did they search people, search your bicycle or search...

Answer: Yes. See they looked to see on the dry cleaning, yes. Physically I was never searched. What, what they did is if they suspected someone, they picked them up, took them to the citadel and I'm talking not necessarily Jews. I'm talking citizens. Took them, let's say the the the underground went and picked up ammunition. An hour later the real German ones _____, so they posted themselves and they search especially by the river and they would arrest...they would ta...and it was mainly men. They would take them to the citadel. At first what they did is they...you had turned in...you had to realize that the identification card are almost like passport. They are very very official, picture and everything. They would they would keep the identi...the ID's and say come back and get them, but the people never went back to get them, so they got wise, you see, and they would hold whoever they had and I heard, I remember hearing of people being tortured to the extent I remember one instance of uh very clearly that somebody committed suicide. I remember it being said. I never saw anyone, I had no contact with anyone who was released from the citadel, but I remember it being said if they talk, don't blame them because they were being tortured. So what was happening, for instance, if a man who...remember the women didn't work in those days. Women stayed at home. If men went out to work and they were due home at five o'clock and word I mean spread like wildfire. You knew when there was sabotage right after it happened. You knew what was going on at all times. If a man, if there was...something had happened and your husband or your father didn't come home at five o'clock, starting from five o'clock until he got home fifteen minutes late, you trembled. You waited and you hoped they hadn't been picked up. But that was not to the Jews. That was to every Belgian citizen because of the very high rate of sabotage that was going in Liege. Now you have to realize that the French Belgians hated the Germans. We're not talking about the Flemish. We were orthodox, but it was not the orthodox that are known in Antwerp. I mean, you know, my father did not wear a yarmulke (ph). I understand my mother was married with a shidle (ph), but of course did not live that way. The synagogue was orthodox. We didn't have a rabbi. He went to Russia for a visit and was caught during the war. The Belgian Jews except maybe for Antwerp...we're talking Liege...people my generation and older, were immigrants. They came mainly from Poland to work the coal mining countries and then went into businesses, tailors, furriers, merchants, and they worked their way out. Belgium is a modern country, uh very open, and you could get yourself financially quite comfortable, even as a Jew. As an alien you had to register. It was...all aliens. There were Italians and then after the Sp...during the Spanish Revolution we picked up not many Spanish because they went mainly to France, so you

had aliens but not Jews. Now I am talking the French part of Belgium. I am not versed of what went on in Antwerp, but the Flemish Belgium may be a little, may have been a little more pro-German than the French Belgium. The Belgium, the _____ hate the Germans, remembered World War I. They did not...the the the...when I say uneducated, we all went to school until like age 12. Everybody went to school. Were not cosmopolitan. They didn't know of a Jew. I never was pointed out, made to feel different. I I remember going to school with matzos. When we went into hiding, when we had to go, we had a neighbor and I don't even remember the name. She said where are we going, so my mother told him we have to leave. We have...because we're Jews and they looked at us. They didn't even know what a Jew...they couldn't believe we were Jewish, you see, because even though we kept Judaism at home...my mother lit candles...the neighbor next door, the Catholic, was not aware of it all or we didn't speak about it in school. There was not the exchange that children have today. This is why St. Nicholas day, Easter egg hunt, uh the the children have communion. My sister who was much more outgoing than I was, went to parties for communion. We had rosaries at home, holy pictures. We did not carry them, but that's what we carried during while we were in hiding because even the very non-staunch Catholics who did not follow all the rules, carved bread before (ph),. They _____. They had rosaries in the house. That's what we carried to be part of the Catholic, but as a Jew until we had to go into hiding and even while we were in hiding, if I can relive it...we had fear but we did not have fear of the Belgium citizen you see, like a whole...Question: Your friends did not turn on you like they did in other cases. They remained very helpful, and when you were in hiding, were they helpful to you?Answer: My Monsieur Madame LeBare...I went to stay there. I mean this was a couple who were maybe at that time maybe in their fifties, late forties...you know, when you are young they look a lot older...Monsieur Madame LeBare I went to. Uh where I was in hiding they took me in because they were anti-German but they...I...I don't think they would have risked their life to the extent that this man in the country did to get us papers, to get the false identification card. It took one rotten apple to kill the whole thing. You have to realize that the villages, everyone knew we were Jewish. Everyone knew we were hiding. There was no way...nobody abandoned us when when my mother and my sisters were arrested and brought to the main road, and the farmers also...this came back from a farmer that I have no reason to doubt them, that they tried to help in saving the children. The the ordinary farmer, the ordinary citizen...no one turned on us. I mean Madame _____ or the doctor did not turn against me. What they did is they didn't want to risk my staying there. There was no need for it. It was too dangerous. I could not stay with Monsieur Madame LeBare because he also was hiding because he was supposed to have gone to Germany, you see, to work the factories. You have to realize Hitler was loosing at the Russian fronts and and all the Germans...the the German citizens were in the army. They needed civilians so he also was hiding in his own home. They couldn't pick up everybody, so they were afraid...they didn't turn on me. I stayed there but for their safety, for my safety, we couldn't stay together. We went back...my father and I got on a bus. We went back to the farm. They spoke to us. They could have turned us in. You see, we went to get information...what happened, what...but nobody turned us in. I...we left, we left the farm. Nobody turned us in, but it took what they called _____ who worked for the Germans whether I feel, whether they were ignorant or there are always people who go on the winning side to protect themselves or whether they did for money I don't know, so it took one person to do it, but as a whole, no...no one. I went back to the farm. I went to Monsieur Madame LeBare, and no one said you must be...you know, it was worked out so that I was safe, and I was able to get on a train and go to Brussels. Nobody threw me out. We

were on a bus. Farmers...we got the story. They could have called, they could have called the Germans. They could have called the Gestapos. They could have the ___ Germans and had my father and I arrested. We survived through the end of the war. If it wouldn't have been for the Belgium citizens, for the Catholics, we could have never made it. Not only they helped, but they did risk their lives. I mean if they would have been caught, uh...

Question: We have to pause there.

END OF TAPE 1

Answer: We knew we were...when I walked the streets when I went on errands, even when I went home on weekends as a maid, when I was working as a maid, during...I don't remember...it took me a half an hour, forty-five minutes on my bicycle...I had no fear during that period. Uh I also had an incident that happened. We live in...it's hilly. The trucks did not run on gasoline...it was butane, whatever they run...and it was common practice to hook up to the truck in the back and go up the hill. My skirt caught on to the truck and I fell and I broke my collar bone. I can prove it. And I remember there was a man sitting in the open truck in the back and they picked me up and put my bicycle on and I said don't let me die three days before my birthday. It was September 11. That's how I remember the date. The fear was not a constant fear, you know, on the everyday living. Sure we knew like before I went in to be a maid and the family sat together and we talked and we had to play cards with my father...we griped, I mean like any ordinary teenager.

Question: And your father was present...

Answer: We were all together...the the family except for the brief period where my two sisters and my cousin went into an orphanage which...I don't remember how long they stayed, whether they stayed a month, two months, and then the nuns said my sister...my sister was too old to really be considered uh an orphan. Uh the the food was not as...it sounds it sounds crazy...the food was not as good as at home. Remember, we ate fresh vegetables, fresh foods, cream. My my...I was much heav....I was heavier than I have ever been and we lived as a family. We burned wood. I mean...we we we...on most everyday thing, no. A man came to cut the woods behind. They befriended us. They offered to take my cousin...

Question: I'm still just a little bit confused. You were living as a family with a family, and yet you're working as a maid?

Answer: No. The the whole...up until about...I don't know how long I was a maid...three months, four months...the whole family was together until this person came and told my parents about my going in to become a maid so as to be separated from the family. We were in hiding when I had to fill out papers and I had to go back to to the village, to _____...in hiding for twenty-two months. I was a maid for only several months, so the first part of the hiding, two families were together, completely together. For a short period, my sisters and my cousin...but that was much later until you you get your bearings, until...and I don't remember at which point of hiding they went to the orphanage. I was too old. There was no two ways...we lived two families together in a little...I'm telling you, a small house in three rooms upstairs. We can't even

call them bedrooms...we turned them into bedrooms and two rooms downstairs, so we were two families together and my father went to help the farmers. Uh we rode our bicycles. We we didn't work. Uh we didn't know...you know, you had to take it on a day-to-day basis because we didn't know how long we were going to be in hiding. We left the house with no fear. We rode our bicycles to the next village with no fear. We went to to the farmers to pick up eggs or whatever we needed with no fear. My sister and I went in to Liege for our ration stamps. How did I feel? I think on the way down there was not that fear because we didn't have to fear every every citizen, you know, we passed, or or truck or every farmer. When we went to to the station where they handed out the ration uh stamps, to give you the instance when the Germans were looking for I don't know what and the people who were distributing them according to _____ card with the Juda stamped on it, so they protected us. I am sure we didn't realize, at least we, me as a teenager, realized the full extent of what was happening. I was aware...I didn't understand Kristallnacht, for instance, until many years later and you see pictures. I knew it was there. I remember when the Germans invaded Poland before...you know, we were going tracing back. My...we had balconies. You know, this is European style. There were balconies, and I remember...it was a beautiful sunshiny day. My mother was crying, and I couldn't understand, but my mother remembered World War I, you see. I remember we left Liege because everybody yelled they're dynamiting the bridges, they're dyna...and we lived in the part of Liege we could only go to Germany, so we went to friends on the other side of the city. My father and the other man took off to see what if they could ____ the troops, even though we were aliens, and we went, my mother, Madame Bilkowitz (ph)...they didn't have children...my two sisters and we went...I've seen movies of it, and what happened is in Belgium is the civilians were caught with the soldiers and the planes came and were shooting low and killing civilians, and we were marching with a few belongings, and people were turning around. They said don't keep going. They're shooting at the troops so the civilians are getting killed, so we stopped and we went and I remember we stayed...we slept on the floor with everybody packed in in what was built for soldiers to to stay. I remember trying to make tea with cold water because there was no cold water and we decided to turn around because the people who were trying to go to Fra...to France were coming back and saying the Germans are...with the machine guns, you know, were giving the planes low and shooting, and I saw the first Germans as we were going back. We didn't know where my father and Monsieur Berkowitz were, and I saw the first German. We were not home yet and I could see them on a motorcycle with side car and with the guns and we held on to my mother and Madame Berkowitz. We went back to Liege and my father and Mr. Berkowitz came back. There's nothing to...and we went back home. And during the first two years, everything we had to eat was black market. I never went hungry. When it came to going to hiding, sure we were afraid but we didn't know about the concentration camps. We did not...we knew about the ____ but I as a teenager, I think my parents entwined to shield us. Today we tell our children. And we tell them the world is not all roses, but children were not brought up that way, so they shielded us so...I I I remember knowing...when you went went into Poland, I remember my mother crying when war was declared and they ta...you know, they they came in. We went into hiding. I remember my parents talking. I can see my father walking up the stairway, afraid when I hea...when I hear boots. When I see them to this day I shutter because I can see the Germans marching with the boots and not necessarily Gestapos. I can hear, I can remember when the the this Gestapo stopped because they thought they saw a light coming out of our windows. But we were not afraid of the everyday soldier you see, who...and we, where we lived we prob...we might have had more than let's say Brussels, because we were at the

German border, and there was what we call _____ where they train soldiers, you see, and they occupied it. The Americans occupied it in reverse when they liberated us. The hiding...yes, we knew but maybe some of it over forty years kind of...but I remember we went into the woods to sleep because the Ger...the the farmers came and said, you know, the Germans are searching for I don't know what, but going into the city, coming back...until the Germans stopped us at the bridge and I mean I trembled, but I don't think I comprehended even what was happening in the citadel when people came out and said they're torturing, because as a fifteen year old girl, you know, you don't...unless unless you live through an experience, you cannot feel what someone else has, but I remember...I was in Brussels...when I went to Brussels when my mother was taken from the citadel in Liege to Maline, and I was getting ready to send a package, and Madame Freedman said to me, Frida...I don't know how she found out...she says you can't send a package. They've been deported. And why I cried and why...I felt hurt. You know, I'm trying to remember, but I must have known that it was something terrible, and I remember she made me go to the movie and I was...so I came...their son who was younger, and I did not want to go, and she says you have to go because she felt it was better for me but I remember crying. I remember feeling terrible that they were deported, you see. But whether I understood...we didn't know about the the gas chambers. Nobody knew. But whether...I don't think I was scared. I was so...I remember crying. I remember not wanting to go to the movie, you see. I know when I went into the hospital for appendicitis, I I was afraid to divulge my real name, you see, but...

Question: Because it was Jewish?

Answer: Yes. First of all I would have divulged I was in hiding, you see. I had another name. I must have been afraid enough, but not when I walked the streets because everybody...you know, the ordinary civilian walked the street, and only...and in Brussels I did not quite have the fear because Br...Liege was much more dangerous sabotage-wise, you see. There was a lot more going on in Liege. My father while in hiding...we knew about the underground, you see. Once I went to Brussels I was detached from that, and I don't think I feared for my life during the last three months of the war.

Question: Let's just pick up and trace again...I know we've been through it before, but just a little bit more slowly...you're in hiding. You're living with the two families. And what happens next?

Answer: What happened next? We grew the vegetable. We we we went to fetch water. We cooked everything the hard way. You know, you have to remember we did laundry on the scrub board. Not only we didn't have water, we had to go get the water. We had...the the when they used to cut the trees, they used to leave pieces of wood so we gathered wood to burn in the stove. We did not burn coal. Our days were busy from morning till night.

Question: What was your next phase, after the two families? You didn't stay as the two families?

Answer: No. I went into Liege to become a maid. My sister very shortly after went to the next or the same village to a doctor in the village to become a maid, but she was ill. She did not feel well, and the doctor told her to go home to to recuperate, so I was in Liege as a maid. Went home every other weekend on my bicycle.

Question: So your family remained a unit...

Answer: The family remained as...the two families remained as a unit. This is why when the Gestapo came...except except my father. My father went, came to Liege and went in...we had one big hospital. He went to the hospital on Friday. But this is what families tried to do is not to stay together. This is why my sisters went into an orphanage...

Question: A Catholic home...? Answer: Yeah. Well, they're all Catholic. We...I assume everybody knows...went to a Catholic orphanage to try to separate...you were not in a cluster when this happened, which is exactly what happened you see. Uh a lot of families...that's what they tried to do...save the children, to separate the children from the adults.

Question: Do you remember the day that it happened?

Answer: When they were arrested? May 5, 1944, five o'clock in the morning. The Gestapo came to pick up the family, and remember this...on March...March 5, excuse me. March 5 at five o'clock in the morning, and you have to remember the weather...wee hours in the morning and it's dark, and they took them from the house to the main road to question them and my mother tried to save the children by telling them that they were not her children. But the Germans did not take it, and the farmers tried. I don't know to what extent, and the Germans did not take it and I guess no one asked for me. Whoever reported us didn't realize that I was missing but they did ask where my father was and my little sister said my father was in the hospital and the German slapped her for lying. In this case the farmers who did not specifically do something physical for us like making the papers or something, but they knew we were Jewish. We had food. We had eggs. We had milk. We had everything we wanted. My father worked for it, but uh nobody paid for us you see. I mean there was no exchanges, you know, wherever...I don't know where we got the meat. I remember a ham, a smoked ham, and my mother never touched it. I mean my mother could not get away from the kosher laws even though the meat she ate was not kosher. The farmers were there to notify us. Why they didn't know...they came at five o'clock in the morning. If they would have known I can assure you we would have been warned, but this was March 5. Remember D-Day was June 6th. The Allied troops were getting ready for D-Day. There was heavy bombing. Hitler was fighting on the Russian front where all the Ger...they needed the soldiers on the Russian front, so you had the Catholic citizen, the Belgium citizen, in hiding because they didn't want to go to work in Germany, and it's hard to comprehend. How do you hide in your own house, but everybody was hiding, and as a whole, whoever had to send the letters out to say yes we have to go to the train station and you have to report because you have to go to Germany, these people were against the Germans too, so if you had _____ where where...I don't know what the percentage was, but there were not many. All you needed is one or two and they had to be careful that the underground didn't kill them because the Catholics were German-haters enough to do it because I know they did it whoever caught. As a matter of fact, when the Jews came back from the camps, Belgium Jews in Liege did not own property, did not own houses. For some reason there was a couple...and we were not friends of theirs...owned a house. The family, a boy, girl, mother and father, were deported. The girl and the boy came back. They were around my age...I don't remember...they were one of the first ones to come back from the camp. The _____ had

occupied their house. Do you know what happened when they came back? People went in and had a bonfire throwing them out of the house, you see. So the fear we had was the fear of being caught and being caught in a cluster, which had happ...which happened. You see, if my sister hadn't been sick, she too would have survived. Uh we were also afraid of another Jew because you...the list, the names of the Jews and I'm talking strictly Liege, that it got out, was handed out, was prepared by a Jewish family. They ended up in hiding. As a matter of fact, they had two daughters, one my age and one a little bit older. They ended up in hiding and you know, people under certain circumstances do certain things to save their life. I think it's well known that certain people did things in the camps, that it went on at top levels in trying to save their lives. This not unknown. It's not uh surfaced as much as what we went though, but there was a Jewish couple...I can't think of their name. Only the daughter's name I remember. After the war, they were shunned. The older daughter ended up going with an American who was not Jewish...he was Protestant...someplace in Tennessee or something. She was pregnant before she was married. Now we're going back to the days when when this happened it was the worst thing that could happen. Everybody says he deserves it. So you were also concerned of what another Jew might do in order to save his...I think when everybody went into hiding, every one realized no one could save themselves no matter what they did, so this this man who who who did this, ended up in hiding like everybody else, but he was...they were separated from the girls. The girls ended up in a Catholic home. What you also had...my parents, my mother was a very good person, very soft-hearted, and this is how this couple, Rochelle and her husband and the baby, came in hiding with us, because we wanted to help them but it would have been much smarter if we didn't, if...we should have been more selfish so you didn't have as large a cluster of people together, but my parents knew her when she was what, fifteen, sixteen, and he was from Czechoslovakia. They knew him as a youngster, so they did for them and we went in together, but as a whole, Jews did not...I think my father ran into the man who had given out the list because you know you walked the street, you went into the city, and he knew the two girls were in a Catholic home and he wouldn't tell my father where because he didn't want...you see, he was smart in a way. He didn't want other Jews to find out because the more you had, the more dangerous it was for them. So the idea was to do the best you could for yourself, but not do for another one, not to be caught in a cluster, but we were in a cluster no matter how we tried. And uh Rochelle and...they came...I don't know how much later. It was it was not a month because after the the teenagers were, you know, had to go out and no one, no one that I know of in that group came back. This was right at the beginning. They came...it might have been a week later, ten days later, that they called them in, so they came and joined us and we were two families together which was not good so what happens when the Gestapo came, everybody was together. Why Rochelle and her husband never tried to go someplace else...I guess we felt very well-protected because there was no anti-Semitism. Nobody turned in anyone you see. No one turned in anyone, except the ____ because they were underground people that were being picked up and they were trying to find out who was doing it. Sure they found out. Sunday...my family. Thursday the twin brothers who were supposed to have gone up to Germany. Not only that, I think they were working with the underground, and then that...when it was found out that there were things going on uh before and they were trying to find out who was selling out, what was going...I don't know.

Question: What happened to you when you found out that your mother had been deported? What were you doing and what did you do then?

Answer: I was in Brussels, and Madame Friedman, when I went to get ready to make, wanted to get a package ready to send to Maline, Madame Friedman told me, no...they've been deported. I went to pieces. I was crying. I didn't want to believe it. And she told me to...she arranged for me to go to the movie with her with her son, which I didn't want to go. And she says the...I must go and I don't remember which movie I saw. I know it wasn't an American movie. They didn't allow it. And I think that the last three months I must have lived on a...first of all my father was in jail. I was separated from my father and we knew that the Allied troops were getting ready to land. Remember, this is May, and my family went out uh May 19 you see. D-Day was June 6th, so while they were at the citadel, I was busy making arrangements to send packages. We made arrangements to get letters in, packages meaning if you read one of the letters that was sent out of the citadel, they're asking for canned meat, anything that can be preserved. They're asking for shoes. She's asking for candy...we call them bon bons...for the child. Uh she's asking for thread. She's asking for a bra. So during...from March 5 to May 12th was it...I was busy with that you see. I was with Monsieur Madame LeBare in a...oh no, I was not with Monsieur Madame LeBare the whole time. When I left where I was a maid, I don't know how...I ended up...I forgot about that...in the home of a law...oh, probably through their daughter who was married to a lawyer. I was in Liege. I remember...she lived along the river and I ended up in the home of a lawyer, a single woman who had never been married. She smoked a pipe. She had a boy friend. I didn't expect...understand the extent of it. You know, I was very naive. Remember from the age of fifteen to the age of eighteen, I didn't have normal growing-up. Yes. I was in the home of a lawyer, and I remember baking bread and I remember cleaning the house, but she was not...I was not the maid maid that I was before and I was arranging to make packages to send to the citadel and I was arranging to keep my father in jail, and she's the one I says you get my father released...I'll kill you. I was not eighteen years old, and I turned to the lawyer, the son-in-law of the home where I was hiding who was very nice, you see, and he arranged when my father came up for trial to keep him in jail, because my father was ready to surrender himself to the Germans. I forgot about that part. I stayed with her for short time, so I don't think I had time to be scared. I didn't have time for anything. I don't think...my father had the brunt in trying to pay someone to get the family released from the citadel and when I went to Brussels, I didn't know about the gas chambers. I knew they were deported. I know I went to pieces. I...I was going on eighteen but it was my mother who went. I remember crying and I remember saying no, I don't want to go to the movie. I remember distinctly, and I lived the last three months...we each had, each of us three girls had in the padding of our coat my aunt in Cleveland, her name and address. She was the only relative we had outside of Europe except an uncle who was on a kibbutz in Israel. We had her address and two hundred American dollars. Remember, this is black market, so that if we got separated the two hundred dollars helped me survive financially. Remember no body had money. No body had a lot. Monsieur Friedman...we won't go into this character. He was a character. Took the two hundred dollars and sold them to an American, sold to a German soldier when...remember the Germans were walk...I mean clean. Nothing, not a pin was out of line when they walked. When the Allied troops crossed the French-Belgium border, the radio was saying they were crossing the Belgium, the French-Belgium border. The news could not keep up with the Allied troops. They were in Brussels. I could see the Allied troops coming. I had been released from the hospital. My appendices were...had opened and there was uh...I had an infection and there was no bandages and I had a gauze bandage around me, and they came and everybody was

kissing them. They wanted to pick me up and I was afraid the suture was going to open (laughter) and the Allied troops came in and I saw for the first time German soldiers...you know, this ____ with the jacket, and I remember one distinctly. Remember, I'm going on eighteen and I'm seventeen...dragging a horse. They were selling, they were trying to get American dollars. They were trying to get anything they could lay their hands on because the German mark, the Belgium money was worth, was worth absolutely nothing, so my two hundred American dollars, I never saw it because he kept...he kept it. We sold to uh German soldiers on the black market. It would have brought in a fortune probably. That I remember distinctly. I remember getting on the train and I remember it was dusk and and I couldn't go anywhere else, because I wanted to get back with my father. Whether the thought of the state of my mother and sisters came into in my mind at that time...I don't think so. What I can recall distinctly is saying I want to be with my father. I want to be home for my eighteenth birthday. That I remember. Whether I thought or I wondered what happened to my mother...at the time maybe I didn't. My main aim was getting back with my father, which I didn't do right away because I stayed with Monsieur Madame LeBare. When I got to ____ there was no transportation. I got on an American jeep. Took me into Liege. Then I worked on getting my father, getting, you know, my father out of jail. He was an alien. They were going to send him and at the time there was already becoming Russia, that part of Czechoslovakia. I'm trying to think and I can't...did I wonder what happened to my mother and sisters as the Jews came out of the concentration camps. I guess we were hoping to see them come out, because they went out very soon before D-Day, but because see they deported them once more even after D-Day. This is June 6th they landed. They didn't come into Belgium until September, so we called them _____. One group of Jews went out and there was another one I understand went out after them. So we were hoping as Jews came out of the concentration camps...Rochelle came out. She does not remember...I saw her in Israel...that I went to see her after she came home, but she didn't talk about what happened. I remember her crying, but I went to see her because when I saw her in Israel about eleven years ago, I said to her, I said Rochelle, don't you remember I saw you, and she said no, but I remember. Cause she told me at the time she was sterilized, that she, you know, she was not...Mengeler sterilized her, because when I was in Israel...that was before they announced that Mengeler had died, whether it's sure enough beside the point (ph), and she said to me, she says I could...in French, of course...if I could lay my hands on Mengeler, and she told me the process of her being sterilized. Today, at the time, could be reversed. She remarried, but she cannot have children. She could not, you know, she could not have children. And what I remember at liberation is when the Jews came back, this whole thing...we were hoping my mother would come back, you see. And then at first, you know, they were released quite easily and then they were detained to rebuild their health and, you know, they were cleaned up and that's when they straggle in and somebody told my father, you know, people survived and it was a Belgium from Liege, who had been deported earlier...I don't know at which point...he said to my father, don't keep hoping. I took them out myself out of the gas chambers. And my aunt by marriage who is the only one left in Belgium now, when I went back she made me aware, and this has always been hard for me to swallow, but this was the time when he ran out of gas, and the people were not completely dead before they went into the the ovens, and that has been a very, very hard thing for me. At first I told myself, oh they weren't tortured. They were not used for experiments, and I thought of them of going into the gas chambers and being killed right away, you know. They put peo...prisoners and they electrocute them, and I guess this is what I wanted to believe is they went in, until Rochelle just sent me her letter and said they were in very bad...you know, they were on trains,

you know, for two days from the 19th to the 21st. I lived with that because I made myself believe that they went in...they went into the gas chambers and went out right away, but that is not so because they were not...that's when people did not go out completely because he was exterminating too fast and there was not enough gas before they put them in the crematories, and when this was pointed out to me...I tried to put in the back of my mind. Then when I came to the States to live with my aunt, I came in May and in the fall...I don't remember what month...we had high holy days and my aunt wanted to go to ____ for my mother and I absolutely refused and I said oh no. I...I remember. I say if I go to ____ for my mother, I'll bury her. And I did not want to go for that reason. I mean it's childish. It's unrealistic, but I remember saying to her no. I'll bury my mother. And I would not go to _____. And it took me a long time I think because I was told that my sister had a choice of going with wom...with the wom...in the women's camp and to my mother. I think to myself, you know, she was old enough to remember her name. She...I mean I was...when she went out she was sixteen in June, June 20 or 21st. She was old en...for many many years after hoping oh, she got lost someplace on the Russian side and she couldn't get out and maybe someday...and this is something that I must admit even to this day even though I know, I know, I know...there is a trace in me and I've never said this to my son...there's a trace in me that keeps telling me she's alive someplace. (Crying) I don't know why and I know it isn't so...but I didn't want to bury my mother. For many many years I did not want to go to _____, and I know my sister is gone, but I think it's something in you that keeps that little bit of hope, that little bit of twinge and you know, everybody had parents. Everybody had sisters. Everybody had brothers. Now we are slowly entering an age, you know...parents have died off and I realize that parents do die, and I think this has helped me to accept...and children loose parents at an early age because of illness, and as I get older and I have very, very close friends in Cleveland...they're family to me...whose mother and father have died, you know, from age. I think if the word accept is the right word, I'm learning to live with it because we do die, but at eighteen I didn't want to accept it, you see. And I think it's a little bit easier for me to accept and it's been many years that my mother died, because I've seen my friends losing their mother and father. I happen to have friends whose parents lived for a long time, you know, until eighty, eighty@two, and they just lost them a few years ago. One of them just lost them two years ago, so it does happen, so maybe it's made it more acceptable to me that my mother died. My sisters...I don't know. When a friend of mine died because of illness, so I'm slowly entering the age, you know, illness and things. You know, I had a hard time adjusting to the high holy days, uh especially Rosh Hashanna and Yom Kippur...not so much Passover, but Rosh Hashanna and Yom Kippur. There's the family tie that I don't go to pieces anymore. I haven't had any nightmares or screaming for my father and fire burning in a long time I don't think. Uh it uh...you know, time heals. My sister is nowhere. I mean there's no two ways about it. I cannot, you know, kid myself and I've accepted that my mother is gone, and I try not to talk about it, to remember or to to face the reality. It's silly...that there was not enough gas to kill them and then since Rochelle wrote to me, you know, I...when I see movies with the trains I can't look at them. I went to Yad Vashem. I'm always afraid to see pictures. Running away from rea...reality. When they have real pictures, I'm always afraid to look and to see them. I'm afraid to look at train pictures, you see. I'm always afraid to see my mother or my sisters, which is foolish because it's the real thing, and I can watch movies. I can watch...I can talk about it. When I see it, then I see them and this is...this is the part that I don't like to see is, you know, when they show those skeletal-like people. I know this did not happen to my mother and sisters because they went to the gas chamber right away you see. But I cannot watch the the trains. See my

little sister was fourteen in March, but she was very small, so you see the children. My little cousin...we were very close to him because he had lost his real mother and he was in our house a lot, but I don't think I feel the tie with him as much as with my sisters, and with Rochelle, the little boy...I mean this kid, this this baby didn't sit on a chair. I mean he had all the adults pampering him and spoiling him, so until I get...I don't think I have fully accepted that there was not enough ___ and they were dragged out half-alive. I don't know. I tell myself maybe they didn't, and I cannot, and I cannot see the trains. I cannot watch it. The rest I can accept and I always say to the Americans, you came two months too late as far as I'm concerned. You know, my son is an American. I consider myself fully Americanized. All my friends are American. I never affiliated with people who came from Europe because Belgium is very different. I was one of the first...I was not a deportee and I came, I landed in New York exactly...._____ year after D-Day. I was really fortunate that I met girls my age. Whether they felt sorry because I didn't speak English very well. I Americanized but I always say you came too late, two months too late, and they bombed supposedly the railroad and they missed because had the railroads been damaged enough, the trains couldn't have gone out you see. So I had...oh is it resentment, towards the Allied troops. You know, I'm an adult now and I realize that especially with what goes on now you can't _____ all the time, but I remember the evenings and we waited and we waited and we hoped for the Allied troops to come and we waited and we hoped and I think that's what kept us going. And that's what...because I remember talking about it. My parents talked about it. We talked about it. We just waited. We talked about the Allied troops coming, and they came June 6th and they went out May 19th. You see how close. But they did not land in Belgium until September...until Septem...the early part of September, because I went home for my birthday September 14. So this...I think this is what kept us going in hiding. The feeling, the fear was only when you heard sabotage went on. Not even when we were in the country but in Liege...you didn't know who they were going to arrest. You didn't know who they were going to put in the citadel to torture, and we had these Catholics, these wonderful people who would have done anything to to to help us, you see. Papers were made out, I mean to such an extent that my father got called to go to Germany and then the the the mayor of the village said we made a mistake on his age, and they made him ten years older, you see. Uh people who found a place for me to go as a maid. When my sister took over, found the orphanage. Now let me tell you that when they went to the orphanage, my parents had to pay for it. The orphanages, the _____, the Catholic did not take you in unless it was paid. Remember these people are on donations, on income. They did not take them unless you had the means to pay for their support, and as it is, you know, they were rationed also, you know, so you...it was not an easy thing. But that you had to pay for. Our papers, our hou...we we paid the rent on the house, OK. But it was minimal because there was no electricity. There was no water. There was nothing, but the people who got us the house didn't ask for anything. The people made contact in us for anything. The people...this man who made the the the false ID papers did not get paid. The people who made the contacts for us did not get paid. Everything was done to help us as Jews without any financial reward. The LeBare got jewelry. Like I say, they were gold rings. We had British coins also in gold that we sold for money to survive. All of that was brought...anybody could have taken...it was brought for free, for no reward, nothing, and these people have never even been recognized realize. When I went to Yad Vashem I saw they had names, and I thought oh, my didn't I do that, but I don't know to what extent they consider somebody helping the Jews, you know, to recognize and put their name there. I don't...maybe Rochelle put their name there, because there would have been cost making out the...and I mean the papers were made but

if they took our identification papers when we went to the registry, we were registered in the...we were real, you see. My little sister didn't need a card. My cousin didn't need a card. You had to have them at age...was it fifteen we got the...even a Belgium citizen had to register and carry an identification card.

Question: Let's look at the day of liberation and how you got to America.

Answer: I had...this was my mother's sister...the address was sewn into my coat for that purpose to have contact with someone and via an American GI...he contacted my aunt before civilians were allowed to write and I don't know how the letter got through because it gave his location, and I lived with my father which was...as marvelous as parents as I had, my father was impossible. He was an entirely different man. He had the responsibility of an eighteen year old girl. The soldiers were roaming the streets. The girls were sleeping with the soldiers. You know...this post-war...this is normal. We're talking American...we had the Americans in Liege. Uh he was old-fashioned in that he came from a small village, small town in Czechoslovakia. I had grown up all of a sudden to be eighteen, nineteen. I was...he did not allow me to wear lipstick. I made...became friends with a girl and we'd walk to each other's house. In the evening the streets roamed with soldiers, and I used to find that my father didn't quite trust me and he used to say why should you be different. He used to follow me. Uh this girl's name was Rose, and we used to go halfway...if she came to our house...back and forth. And we walked and it was a short distance. If I went out in the evening, he'd...he'd...he didn't know whether to trust me not to...every other girl was sleeping...houses turned into prostitution homes. I mean this is post-war situation, and he thought I would be better off to come to the United States to my aunt, and correspondence started and I guess my aunt prepared to send me the papers to bring me. Meantime a first cousin of my father came through the Jewish Brigade out of Israel through Italy and he wanted me to go to Israel, but it was too late. My papers had been started to go to America. It could have been very possible that I would have ended up in Israel instead, but only because we had my aunt's...my aunt had moved but somehow or other the letter reached her to where she had moved from one house to the other, and I left my father not on the best of terms. There was...I resented my father for not trusting me. My father resented me for I don't whatever reason. It was a very...but he did take care of me. He borrowed money. This was post-war...Belgium took all their money off the market and printed new money. Nobody had francs, so he borrowed money to pay for my passage by boat at that time. Called it a boat...I came on an American boat that had been used for troops and I used to say that I came on a boat that had no class because it didn't have first, second or third class. It was a ship that was used for uh civilian...as a matter of fact I had my visa...I had a trouble...I had...they had no trouble getting a visa. I had trouble getting a passport because I was considered without a nationality. I was no longer considered Czech. I was not considered a Russian, and the for...the Belgium Foreign Ministry gave me a temporary passport good for one year so I could put my visa on it, and I had to go to Antwerp to the American Consulate and I had to go to Brussels to the Foreign Ministry to get this called laissez-passe (ph) which I still have, to get my visa, but I couldn't get passageway because the American troops were still coming back. The war brides were coming in and I remember it was a Saturday. The travel agent came. I was at my friend's house, and he says I have passage for you. And overnight I had to prepare to come. I still have the suitcase I came and hard papier mache (ph)...remember this is post-war. I had a coat that was made...my uncle was a tailor and the navy blankets from the navy, green blankets, found their way on black

markets. My uncle made a beautiful hand-made, hand-made tailored coat...I mean very fine tailoring, and I came to the United States with a coat and it was made from a green navy blanket, because you couldn't get fabrics. I came immediately after...Belgium had food. We had everything, and then also they allowed...you could not take money out of Belgium and they allowed five hundred francs...no, a thousand. My father applied two hundred and twenty-five or two hundred smacked on your passport, on your visa...my father allowed, my father applied for a thousand dollars. They allowed five hundred, and I remember going to the bank because I deposited it in the bank in Liege and picked it up in Cleveland and the banker said to me, how did you manage...the two of them met so I came with seven hundred something dollars, seven hundred twenty-five or seven hundred seventy-five...this...the only thing there, so my father saw to my needs, but for some reason didn't feel he could handle a nineteen year old young woman. He was...uh he remarried. I met his widow after he died. I went back to Belgium and she said, your father lived for his wife and his children. So I came to Cleveland and lived with my aunt, and I had a miserable life...don't put that on tape please...

Question: That will be our second tape is which we will not do. We're going to have to stop now and we'll take the pictures.

Answer: Oh, OK.

Question: Thank you very much.

Answer: Oh, you know...I won't have to go into my miserable life...(laughter)...

Question: I don't...unless you want to, but we're really out of tape...we have just a few more minutes left. We have a few more minutes, and what we're going to do...TECHNICAL CONVERSATION...OK. That picture's taken in the garden facing the house where we were in hiding and this is the vegetable garden that we grew with all sorts of vegetables. I imagine the back line is peas. Uh the man...the young man...his name in French is Jacques (ph). In Yiddish it was _____ who they were in hiding with us, and Rochelle, his wife, the only survivor. She came out of the camps. She is now in _____ in Israel and is married and their little boy, Ronnie, were in hiding with us. He was at that time a little over a year when he...he was not quite a year when he came into hiding to join us...TECHNICAL CONVERSATION...This is the house where we were in hiding for twenty-two months with no electricity, no water, no utilities. Uh again there's Jacques and the baby and next to him uh is...against against the window is my little sister Nellie, who was at that time oh about thirteen and Rochelle again next to her. My father and my mother in front of the doorway. I'm on the couch. I broke my collar bone, and I had to be home for a few days uh with my arm being in a in a bandage as best as it could be. We got the house where there were two rooms downstairs and three rooms upstairs and each one was made into sleeping quarters and one room...I don't remember...was used one room for cooking and everything together and the garden was...that...on the last picture was in front of it, on the opposite side. We had woods in the back and farmland in the front. And that was taken in 19...when I was seventeen. That was taken in 1943. It must have been September or October...TECHNICAL CONVERSATION...OK. This is a picture of our family taken in 1931. My father was born about 1901. My mother was born about 1902. And uh I am on her right hand side, and I was born in '26 and my little sister is on my...my little sister Nellie is on

my mother's lap and uh she was born...let's see...I was born '26, '28, '30...March 1930, and next to my father is my middle sister, Bertha, and she was born in 1928, also born in Czechoslovakia...TECHNICAL CONVERSATION...And this was taken just before I came in '46, yeah. Oh no. No. It was...what year was the...no...no. That's my date of birth there.

END OF INTERVIEW