United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Henny Fletcher Aronson
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Henny Fletcher Aronson, conducted by Randy Goldman on September 23, 1994 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.

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

HENNY FLETCHER ARONSON
September 23, 1994

Q: Will you begin by telling me your maiden name, when you were born, where you were born?

A: Well, my maiden name was Fletcher, and I was born in _____.

Q: Was your name Henny Fletcher?

A: My name was Henny Fletcher, and I was born in Kovno, Lithuania, in 1924.

Q: The date?

A: November 25, 1924. Well, are you already recording me? Yes? I had a younger brother, who was three years younger than I was, and I suppose we could be considered an upper middle class family, because we had a lovely apartment and my brother and I went to a private school which was a rarity. Basically, I was not lacking in anything. I was pretty happy go lucky young kid, and we were both growing up like average two children. We used to go to the country in the summer time, and in the winter time, I used to spend my days after school on the ice skating rink in Macobie (ph) because I like gymnastics. And my brother was a nuisance, like all the other little brothers who were always in the way. I cannot tell you that I had any difficulty growing up.

Q: What was your father's business?

A: My father was a businessman. He was actually in manufacturing. He didn't, he people who did it for him, educational toys, like chess, dominoes and all the other ones and also children's games. The highlight of my life was in December, my father used to deliver all the -- have the orders delivered to the stores on our main street, which is the equivalent of Park Avenue in Kovno, which _____, and all these stores were Gentile stores mostly, and I was the one who used to deliver all these packaged orders. And I had friends of mine who were looking forward every year in December to accompany me because my father used to hire a sled with two horses and a driver, not a driver actually, whatever you call him, and he used to put all the boxes in the sled and put my friend, the one which I picked, and me in the seat cover with a heavy fur cover, and then we used to stop near every store. I used to walk out. He used to deliver the box. And I used to say I am Fletcher's daughter in Lithuania, and they used to give me the money. It was the highlight of me and my friends period usually before Christmas time. I had an exceptional father, really, because he had tremendous confidence in me. He just thought at the age of 10 or 11 that I could do anything. And I remember when I was 11 years old, he called me into his room, and he opened up the desk drawer, on the right side, second drawer, and he showed me a bank book and there was money in there, written down how much money. And I said to him, "what's that for?" He said, "that's for you, for your

dowry." And I said to him, "dowry, you're not going to pay anybody to marry me." I was so furious then. As I said, he instilled in me tremendous confidence, self confidence, and I think that helped me a lot during the war and after the war because he was a great optimist. He was a very funny man. He always had interesting jokes and interesting stories. He also designed calendars -- in Lithuania -- I don't know Lithuania-- but every single day you tore off a page. I think they have it here, too, I'm not sure. And on the back of the page of each day there was a joke, and my father was the one who wrote all the jokes on the other side of each day. So, I grew up in a household with almost like a funny man and he always made life very happy and amusing.

Q: Were you close with your mother, too?

A: Oh, yes. I had a wonderful mother. She was the opposite, very quiet, very refined lady who always looked for me to help out, but I was never around because I was busy, as I said, having fun. But she had help, but she was a lovely lady, unassuming and very gentle and very kind and I loved her very much. She was a very pretty lady. I remember on high holidays she used to get dressed up always in a grey wool suit with a silver fox fur for not a collar, but it was called a shawl. And she was blond, and every year she used to go to the women who used to make hats and the hat was always open on top so her blond hair would show and an large, large brim. And whenever she used to walk in the synagog for the high holidays, people looked at her. She was tall and a very nice lady.

Q: Were you religious?

A: No. Well of course we were kosher in the house. I wouldn't say we were ultra religious, but we were kosher at home, and we celebrated the high holidays and Hanukkah and Passover and traditional, I would call it. Then, of course, when the Russians came into Lithuania, we were kind of on pins and needles, because my father was a businessman. He was afraid they were going to send us to Siberia. So, he started planning on how we should get out of Lithuania. It wasn't easy, actually, for people who are more or less established to just throw away everything and pick up the family and leave. That was in 1939, and at that time, we had relatives in Germany, and one time they sent us a letter asking us to help them, because they had this store. They were store keepers and one day the Germans came in -- that was written in the letter -- the Germans came in, took away the head of the family from the store and told the wife, he's going to be back in a few days. We just want to interrogate him. The next day, two days later, they came back with a little box, which in Lithuania peppercorns came in little boxes, and they came back and handed her the box, put it on the counter and said, "this is your husband." So, this was the letter we received in '39. And of course, my parents tried to help them to leave, and they did arrive in Kovno, but is didn't sound real. It just didn't sound that people could do that to other people. So, my mother definitely felt that something was wrong with her, but my father kind of believed it because there were quite a number of Polish Jews who kept on running away at that time from Poland. So, he started somehow plotting things out how to get out. So, the first thing he did, which he wasn't silly, but he went to _____ to

see his family because he came from Vilna. I'm just digressing because I just wanted to show you what a great man he was in a way. He wasn't actually, he wasn't demonstrative, but he was exceptionally supportive of me. I don't know, but he really was. Before the Russians came in, I had a beautiful coat made for me. It was grey wool, fur collar, a trench coat with a belt, very sharp. So, my father took the coat and said he was going to see his family in Vilna, and he came back and the lining of the coat was removed and behind the lining was all mink -- filled in with mink. He felt that in case something is going to happen to him, I should have something to fall back on, to sell the coat or sell the mink for my mother and my brother and myself. That is the kind of family I grew up. I really and truly feel personally that I cannot, how should I say it, I could not let this four years, or actually three years, actually horrible three years, ruin my life, ruin me for the rest of my life. It was a period where actually the world went mad, and I happened to be caught in between. It could have happened to anybody who was there. That to destroy the rest of my life and to feed my children with experiences of madmen after the war and live in the past, I couldn't do that, because my upbringing was great.

Q: Let me ask you a little bit more about Kovno before the war. Was it a great place to grow up?

A: Yes, I had no difficulties.

Q: The city, I mean, were there things to do?

A: Yes. There was this school we went to, they had all kind of functions. It was a very good school. And then of course in the winter time we had the ice skating rinks with the music, and we used to go outside and play and dance and do all these wild things, which were wild then. Then I belonged to Macabe, which is an organization, which is a sport organization. I used to spend my days there. I was the ping pong champion. And in the summer we went to the country where I used to hike. I really, maybe I never encountered any problems. I was always exposed to Jewish people, Jewish school, except for the people who were dealing with my father, who were exceptionally nice, too, because apparently they needed his product.

Q: So you didn't have any difficulties?

A: I really didn't, but it turned out worse with the Germans, eventually.

Q: You had a nice life. Did it ever occur to you that that would be taken away?

A: No, no. Not only did it never occur me, but even when I was in concentration camp, I always expected to survive. And I really attributed it to my father. I'm serious, because in retrospect, I mean I thought about it before you came. He really instilled in me a tremendous amount of self assurance and confidence, and if you just do your thing, you'll make it if you want it badly enough.

Q: Now, you were mentioning that you were starting to get concerned after the Russians came in.

A: That's right.

Q: What sorts of opportunities were taken away from you at that time? How did your life change?

A: You mean to leave Lithuania?

Q: No, just in Kovno when the Russians were there, were certain things prohibited to you? Could you continue to practice your religion. Did you still go to school? Was everything basically the same, or did it change?

A: Well, the first thing that changed was the Russians had a theory that they had to relocate the people. Never to leave the same people in the same area. So, what they did, the first thing they did was to move me from my school to another school where I didn't know anybody. I did know some, but -- and the people from the other school were moved to my school. So, they kind of mixed the whole thing up. And, they also, of course introduced all Russian history and Russian, and we were fed with all the Russian propaganda. I wouldn't say -- the only problem as far as I recall is that we were fearful that any day they'll come and just take us to Siberia because everybody around us, whoever was in business, that's where they wound up. The truck used to come, just like the Germans actually. They had the same system. Without warning, they used to knock at your door and say, "Come, take whatever you can just take with you." Put you on a truck, put you on a train, and send you to Siberia. So, that was our only fear at that time.

Q: Did you know people that were going to Siberia, did you know where they were going?

A: Well, they knew, they knew that's what the Russians are doing. They did have some inclination of what they were doing. The people, especially who are in business, who are employing people. So, that was the only fear which I recall my father had. But, otherwise, and as I said, I got used to being in the new school, and I kept on doing my own thing.

Q: Did you continue to practice Jewish holidays and all?

A: I don't really recall, because we were not that religious that it affected us. Probably the people who were religious it affected them. But I don't recall going to Temple that year for all the high holidays. That's something that is kind of murky in my mind.

Q: Do you remember the first day of the war in Kovno?

A: Yes, I do, very much so. It was 1941, June 21, 1941. That was a day that I was supposed to go to my school, my original school to pick up my diploma because I had graduated from high school. I had a pair of silk stockings, which I kept for that special occasion, to put on a pair of silk stockings. I walked to school, which was quite a distance, and I picked up my diploma. It was all rolled up with a ribbon, and I walked home, and as I passed where the President of Lithuania lived, suddenly something fell out from an airplane, because they bombed the President's quarters. I fell on the sidewalk. I got up. I wasn't really concerned about the bomb more than that I tore my stockings. I came home, and we knew something was going to happen because we really -- in spite of the fact that we did not want to believe that the Germans are going to come into Lithuania, and we hoped that it would just pass us by, we knew that they are there and we had no choice at that time. We were already caught between the devil and the _____.

Q: Can you describe the atmosphere in the street at that point?

A: It was chaotic. It was very, very chaotic. It's very difficult to describe the chaos. People really didn't know what to do, because they were trapped. We were really just trapped. We couldn't do anything. We didn't have weapons. We didn't have anything. We didn't have anybody on our side. It wasn't only the Germans that were against us, it was actually the Lithuanians started before the Germans started. So, they started looting and screaming and yelling and beating us up. So, we didn't know which way to turn.

Q: You saw this and this was just all around?

A: Oh, all around us, all around us, yes. We kept our door locked, and we were lucky that they must have got enough from the people around so they didn't manage to break down our door. They were terrible, unbelievable. It was such like, like I said, I never had any contact with them before, but they turned like animals. It was just neighbors, people who you dealt with. They suddenly -- it was almost like they waited for it, like hungry dogs and so it was rough. It was really rough. You know, I read a book by an author by the name of Bothenheimer (ph). He's a Jew. I'm just telling you a little story about it. I belong to a study group, and in the book it described about a bunch of Jews who believed they were being taken by the Germans to a hotel and that eventually they would be staying there until after the war. I was the only survivor. The rest of the people in the group were Americans. And after reading the book the discussion was going on, how stupid could you be. Couldn't you just stand up against the Germans? Couldn't you just stand up against the Lithuanians? There were so many and there were only three or four soldiers around you. And I was absolutely furious, because it wasn't a matter that we were weak, or that we were like sheep. We had no choice. How can you just protect yourself against a bunch of mad dogs. You just can't do that. I mean people did it, and they were immediately killed in front of you. So you just hoped against hopes that you will make it without making any waves.

Q: Now, in the first few days after the bombs were dropped and the Lithuanians were

running around beating people, can you describe what else was happening?

A: Not really, not really. Just trying to figure out what's going to be next, and we were at home most of the time. We wouldn't dare walk out of the house until they came around with those loud speakers directing us what to do. But we packed. We packed mostly silver and mostly valuable things because, you know, in spite of the fact that we hadn't experienced things like that since almost 1924, for I'd say almost 20 years or so, or less than that, we lived a relative normal life. Really, a normal life, but when something happens to you you kind of know it's the survival of the fittest. You kind of know what to do. And you start thinking, you don't need a pillow, you don't need extra clothes, you need something that you can trade eventually. So, we took the silver and some of the jewelry, which my mother had and every upper middle class family had something, because there was no stainless steel and there was no other kind of this stuff which is sold here now, so whatever you had was kind of silver or gold. It was not synthetic. And we knew that the farmers outside in the country will be glad to acquire it, to exchange. Not that we ever experienced it before, but like I said, it's something that you just know.

Q: Now, I know a lot of people were herded up, right away taken outside of the city and killed. Was this something that you were aware of at the time?

A: No, no I found out later on. Like I said, we were just lucky.

Q: Did you have any contact with the Jewish part of the city, Slobotka (ph), at this point, or were you separated?

A: No, no. We did not live -- we lived in Kovno. Actually we lived behind the Post Office. There was the front of the Post Office and behind was the interior where they had buildings. We lived in one of the apartment buildings behind the Post Office. So, maybe that's why, now that I'm thinking about it, maybe they just didn't want to destroy the Post Office. They thought maybe the Post Office not too many Jews live. I don't know, but we were not bothered. We just waited to hear what the next step would be.

Q: It was several weeks, and then did you have to move from where you were living?

A: Yes. Then we were told that we had to go to the Ghetto because they were going to have a separate place, a Ghetto, for the Jews. All they kept on yelling was _____ and we took whatever we could. Now, I don't remember how we got there. I totally forget. I mean I remember so many details, but this is one thing that I just do not remember how we got there. I know we didn't walk. It was quite a distance, and I know that we had quite a lot of stuff by the time we came to the Ghetto, so maybe Father arranged -- I can't really -- it's blank. All I know is that we wound up in a small apartment, which was called at that time the Small Ghetto and which was actually this is where most of the Jews were brought in that particular part of the town. And then after a short period of time, they started coming in and asking for silver and whatever you have, all your valuables, the

ones who brought there, and I remember my parents handing over a box of something with stuff. They saved some of the other ones and then after that there was the big _____ which was called, they decided to shrink, that was their method to shrink up the area, and we were told to come out on the field, four in a row. Actually eight in a row. We started out, and my best friend and her brother and her father and mother were in the same row with the four of us, and they were the other four. And they said, everybody eight in a row and just walk. And the Germans, young, absolutely young faces, must be 18 or 19, inconceivable how you can motivate young people to be so cruel. They just walked and they separated in half, four and four, and they send my friend and her family on one side and my father and mother and brother on the other side. We didn't know what happened. It turned out that her side was the bad side, and these people from that particular side never came back. They were taken and they were killed. Now, all I can contribute it to is luck. She certainly -- I wasn't certainly better than she was and her family. We were both the same people and so, I'm here probably because I was just lucky. So, when they shrunk it, when they eliminated almost half of the population, we had to move to another area in the Ghetto.

Q: This was when, do you remember?

A: This was only 1941. It was quite early.

Q: Soon after the Ghetto was formed?

A: Yes, yes, because at the same time they also called out, they asked for 500 people who are, I mean, personalties, who speak German, who are educated, who are so on and so forth. They had names and these people who were actually dealing with Germany for years, my father almost went because he represented a Germany company too in 1932, and who were professional people. They all went, hoping that they would be able to do something to negotiate with the Germans or influence them. They were called out, and they were killed. This was known as the 500, the top, the cream really of the Jewish population. So, that was all in the same period of time, and they were trying somehow, in retrospect that's the only way I can understand, to kind of shrink the population.

End of Tape #1

Tape #2

Q: Now this action that you were talking about where 500 people were taken away, this was in the beginning days of the Ghetto?

A: Yes. My uncle actually was one of them. He was taken away, and his wife and a child lived with us in the same apartment.

Q: Tell me a little bit about when you lived in the Ghetto. Who was with you?

A: Well, we had a kitchen, a bedroom and a dining room. My brother and my mother and my father and my aunt, who's husband was taken away with the first 500, and her child _____, who was five years old. My father worked for the guild _____ it was called, and I went in the morning to the area where they set up people to go to work, and I used to get up in the morning. My mother used to stay home, and my brother was younger, so he also stayed home for a short period of time with her. I used to get up and go out to, what do you call it? It was a large area where everybody got together near the gate, and there there were leaders. The Germans needed people, and it was like groups that they took them outside of the Ghetto to do some labor. I was lucky enough to fall into the group where my husband was heading that particular group.

Q: You mean you met him? He wasn't your husband then?

A: No, of course not. I was standing there, actually I was standing there in the group, and he had a group of men, and he said he needed a secretary, and he asked me to join him. So, I was lucky. So, I was working in his group. What I was doing at that time, I wasn't doing secretarial work. I was working at an airport at that time. They were building the airport, and we had to carry wood and drag things and so on and so forth. But, it was not too difficult because eventually I helped him to other things.

Q: Like what?

A: Well, the Germans, they were kind of decent, and they said if you will accomplish your, what do you call it, if you'll accomplish what you're supposed to do, your quota, you will be able to get some extra flour from the farmers around. So, that is what everybody worked very hard. Whether you do or you don't, you don't get anything, but here you are told what you will be getting. We certainly were very conscientious. So, we got flour, and what I had to do, I had to divide and kind of weigh the flour and divide the portions to every single person. But, I was so generous that a few times there was none left for me. So, my husband told me, at that time he wasn't my husband, he said don't be so generous.

Q: You were also doing the heavy manual labor?

A: Yes, yes, yes, I did. But this is once in a while that they wanted to be kind they would say, yes, but I was working.

Q: What other kind of work brigades were you on?

A: That's the only one. I was waiting most of the time, and then, of course, I was taken to the farm, a farm. The Germans needed, for what reason I don't know, a group of young women to take on a farm to apparently pick vegetables or plant vegetables on the farm. They dragged me out of this group, and we found ourselves on this farm. I got up in the morning and walked out on the farm and a German came galloping on a horse, a nice big horse with a saddle, and he looked at all of us. We were about 18, 20 women approximately and he picked me and he said to me "Have you ever ridden a horse?" I said no. He said, "Good, it's time to learn." So he got off the horse, and he removed the saddle, and he made me get up on the horse, and he must have talked to the horse or did something to him because the horse started running like a madman, and I thought to myself, you're not going to lose me off that horse, and I made it. Then I finally came down, he said, "Now you learn, now you can pick vegetables." So, I was there for a couple of days, and then I was lucky enough, because I don't think they came back.

Q: Why did he ask you to do that?

A: It was fun for them. I mean, can you imagine a young woman going on a bare back horse who has never ridden a horse, and a wild one. You know what it means to holding onto the horse, not to fall off and break your neck, because that was what he was probably hoping. Who knows, they were mad. They were creatures from hell. They were absolutely mad. I don't think they looked at us as humans and that was exactly what I decided at one time. They didn't look at us as humans. I never looked at them as humans, and I'll just try plain and simple to survive because you couldn't look them in the eye. I know a young woman looked them in the eye. They slapped her to death. They couldn't touch us, thank goodness, because they were told they would be poisoned. Otherwise they would have raped every single one of us. We were 18 year old kids. That's what they did. They did all kind of things for recreation.

Q: Tell me a little bit more of what life was like in the Ghetto itself?

A: Well, life went on when it was quiet, kind of normal in a way. We met, we kissed, we drank, we had fun when we had the opportunity. The young ones, we really tried to live as normal a life as you could. You're talking about people who are 18 or 19 years old. We have no responsibilities, we have no children. We have no family. Now, my mother had a stroke. I mean she just, as a matter of fact, her brother was killed, and then they had the children here, and they made my aunt take her child to be killed. She saw her child being killed, being put on a car, on a truck and I think -- I don't know, I heard gasoline. I don't know. When my aunt came back, she was mad for a short period of time, and my mother

had a stroke. But she survived, and she was pretty good and that's thanks to my brother. He really came through. He was three years younger than I was, but he was a very smart determined young boy. First of all, he was tall. He was blond and didn't look Jewish at all and that was in his favor because every time he used to go to work, he used to just leave the place and go to Lithuanians, whom he knew, and traded some silver or whatever my mother gave him. My mother used to give him a piece of silverware at a time so they would wait for the next piece. He really supported the family. When my mother had her stroke, I was married then already, so when my mother had the stroke, he was really there for her, and he brought her everything, and he brought her to the point where she could walk and talk. So, you ask me how was life, if you asked me or all my friends, it's different. Because you know youth, we'll overcome. You cannot help it, so we'll do it. It's careless, I don't think it was an adventure because it was probably miserable because this one is gone and that one is gone. The whole thing was kind of scary, and the guys also, they are afraid they were going to die tomorrow, let's have fun. For young people it was bad, but not as bad as for my parents.

Q: Were there cultural activities, political activities?

A: No, no. No cultural activities, no political activities, you just try to live from day to day and work, and if you have a chance to have some fun, get married because you were safer. I think we got married after that incident on the farm because I wouldn't say it was safer to be married. I mean, I liked my husband and he liked me and he asked my father for my hand and my father said by all means if anybody will take care of you, he's the one who will, and my father was absolutely right. So, we got married. Not that it mattered much eventually, because they separated us eventually. But everybody felt that if you were married you were kind of safer.

Q: Did you move in with his family or he came where you were?

A: No. We got married on a Saturday, must have been because we worked on Friday, and I moved in -- actually I couldn't move in right away with his family. His family consisted of his mother, a brother and a sister-in-law, and they lived in one room. His mother was in the corner. I remember an iron bed. She was a semi-invalid. She had arthritis, a very bad case. She was in bed most of the time. My husband used to sleep on a cot, and then my brother-in-law and sister-in-law slept in the corner on a bed. When we decided to get married, my husband decided to build a second bunk, above my brother-in-law's bed. He built a very good one. He even cut in the wood a step for me to get up and down. So, it took him a while to build it. So, eventually I moved in with my husband in the upper deck, and he built a little shelf so I could bring my dowry with me, which my mother gave me before I left the house. She gave me about a pound of hard sugar, which was very valuable, more so than diamonds. I don't know how she kept it or where she kept it, and I brought my dowry up there on the second shelf.

Q: You had mentioned a little while ago, about the Small Ghetto being liquidated. That's

where you were living at the time, wasn't it?

A: When?

Q: When did you first move into the Small Ghetto?

A: Actually first we moved -- it wasn't the Small Ghetto, it was where everybody was. I don't know if it was called the Small Ghetto. Eventually they eliminated one and maybe the second one was called the Small Ghetto. Are you talking before the liquidation?

Q: Yes. In the beginning you said you were moved to the Small Ghetto, and even in the beginning, as I understand it, the Ghetto was in two parts joined by a bridge or something, do you know?

A: I don't think so. There was no bridge.

Q: Well, I don't know, there was some sort of street, but there were two parts.

A: Yes, right, you're right, there were two parts. I must have been in the small one originally.

Q: The one that they got rid of?

A: Yes.

Q: Were you there the day they decided to liquidate it?

A: Yes.

Q: What happened?

A: What happened is, they called everybody out in the field and there were eight in a row --

Q: Oh, this was that that you mentioned already, I'm sorry.

A: That's okay.

Q: Do you remember a hospital in there that burned?

A: No. I heard something about it, but I don't remember. This is when they liquidated the small one, and they separated my friend and her family from us, and we wound up in the other part.

Q: Also in that month, a little later in that month, there was a very large action, right?

A: Later that month?

Q: In October, do you remember this?

A: Do you mean when they took children and old people?

Q: No, there was, I believe at the end of October, they took about nine or ten thousand people out, took them to the Ninth Fort, I believe. Do you remember this?

A: No.

Q: Okay, then I won't ask you about it.

A: Because, you know, I remember it vaguely, but I really can't contribute much to it. I do know many people disappeared.

Q: All of a sudden a third of the Ghetto is gone?

A: That's right.

Q: So you had to have noticed something?

A: Oh, yes, I noticed it, but I don't remember. I cannot give you any details about it.

Q: Was there a point in all of this when the atmosphere changed and people started to become more frightened, trying to make plans or hiding places or anything like that?

A: Not then. After the old people and children action, this was when the people realized that something has to be done.

Q: When was that, can you tell me?

A: This was the most horrendous time. It must have been in 19-- we got married in 1943, in November. It must have been in the beginning of 1944. It was -- I don't know the exact date, which is immaterial really. I wasn't working at that time. I was off that day, and my brother-in-law, my husband's brother was also home. So, the two of us were home with my husband's mother. Suddenly the loud speaker started screaming all the people and children out. And my mother-in-law, as I said was a semi-invalid, a wonderful woman, an exceptional lady. She used to teach me how to make gourmet dishes. She was a fabulous cook. She was a pharmacist by education, a wonderful lady. We didn't know what to do. We knew she could not walk, so I looked at my brother-in-law, and he looked at me, and I said, let's hide her someplace. But before we had a chance to do anything, they just broke into the room. As I told you, we were in one room, all five us, and they

said out to her from bed and I stood in front of her and I said, "She can't walk." So they gave me a slap. She can't walk, so carry her. So I said to Miska, my brother-in-law, let's put something on her. She was wearing a nightgown. Anyway, they wouldn't let us do anything. They made my brother-in-law grab her by the shoulders, and I had to grab her by the foot. I tried to pull down her dress-- it would break my husband's heart-- her nightgown, and we carried her out and the street was a nightmare because all you could see were young people carrying these old people like animals. And we carried her to the place where the busses were stationed, and he told my brother-in-law -- they are so young, it is unbelievable, the milk was still on their lips -- to stay, and I'm the one who should carry her out. Now, she was a frail woman. I must have picked her up, and I walked up on the bus, and I figured that's the end of me too. There was no seat, so I had to put her in the aisle, and I covered her up. They looked around to find a seat for me. So, they pushed me down the stairs and said, "you get out of there." That was my memory of this particular day. And I think this is when they took them to the Ninth Fort.

Q: You had a little brother at this time. What happened to him?

A: He wasn't so little anymore. You grow up awfully quick. He must have been 15. He was an organizer. He kind of supported the family. Immediately after I got off the bus and I started running, because I was hysterical, because I was sure that my mother was gone also. So, I ran back to my mother's home, and there's my mother sitting in the chair with makeup. I don't know where by brother found makeup. She was 39 years old, my mother, or 40. My father was completely beside himself. My father got lost in himself rather, so my brother who is the one who fixed up her hair and put makeup on her and told her to sit in this chair and don't move and smile. So, when the Germans came in, she was young, you know. She didn't get up, she didn't blink, so they just let her be this time. What happened to him, was when the Kovno Ghetto was liquidated, we all were taken to the train, and he walked out from the march, he removed his yellow sign, and apparently he had friends, we knew he had friends, because he kept on dealing with them, but he disappeared. We don't know if a Lithuanian saw him walking out and immediately arrested him and some of his so called friends, but we never heard from him again. That was the end of my brother.

Q: Were there sort of regular arrests or beatings or brutalities that you had to notice on a regular basis?

A: In the Ghetto?

Q: Were there guards in the Ghetto?

A: You know, I used to get up in the morning and go to work and then used to come back. How much more brutal can it be what they did having to drag their mothers or fathers or children burning in front of you? I mean I didn't see it every day of my life. I don't think I'd be here. I'd be mad. I mean you can get hardened up to a point. They used to beat up

people. It became, they beat you if they didn't like your face, they used to slap you and hit you. They needed us because we were laborers, especially the young ones. And of the old ones, they just periodically got rid of. The only brutality which was cruel is out of the Ghetto when we wound up in concentration camp.

Q: When you just said that the children were burning, that was in the Ghetto?

A: Yes.

Q: Can you describe it?

A: I don't know if I can describe it, but that's what my aunt said. I didn't see it. She said they dragged the kid away from her, a beautiful little girl, threw her literally into the truck. They had a truck there, and they moved it away somehow, and then it started burning. I don't know what they did. And then they just pulled it away. This was her description because she was beside herself. Or maybe they pulled it out of the Ghetto, and she saw the flames, but it was in her presence she saw that.

Q: What do you remember about the political organization of the Ghetto? I mean, how were things run? Who was running it?

A: No. I really wasn't --.

Q: Did you know anybody who was in the underground?

A: My brother-in-law.

Q: But it was not something that you were involved in?

A: Underground? No, I had a relative who wanted us to go to the underground right before the Ghetto was liquidated, but my husband didn't want to. And we didn't go, lucky. Apparently lucky, I don't know, whatever we did, it turned out we made it somehow.

Q: Now you said after the children and old people were taken away which was I think March--?

A: Yes.

Q: That then you really knew you had to do something?

A: That's right, but we didn't. We tried -- there was nothing we could do because the people outside were not willing to help. So, as I said, we were cornered. We couldn't do anything about it. The underground -- there were all kinds of rumors going around. We just hoped that the Russians were going to come back soon. I mean on the radios they kept on saying

the Germans are running for their lives, and they were already by then, so we were hoping they were just going to leave us alone while they were going to retreat. But they decided to take us with them, and that is when the two of us decided maybe we should build a bunker for the two us, because the bunkers which some of the people built, were sophisticated bunkers which were under the ground. It took them quite a while to dig. When we came to ask if they would let us in, they said it was filled up. There is no more room. So, we decided to do something on our own. So we decided to dig a hole for ourselves because they kept on saying the Russians are at our doorstep. They are going to enter Lithuania any day. So, the two of us worked through the night, and we dug a nice hole in the yard, and we put a large pitcher of water and some crackers, and we made a seat for ourselves down there, and we covered up the hole with a green pillow to make sure it kind of blends in with the landscaping. And then the next day or two days later, the Germans were rounding up the Jews to take them -- don't worry, wherever we take you is going to be better than here. So, we got into our hole, and we covered it very gingerly. We put the pillow on top of it to make sure that some of the leaves and branches could cover the pillow. We sat down, the two of us, and we figured we would last for a couple of days. There was enough air and water. The next thing we heard were people walking, making noise, Germans. They yelled, "look here, look there, there must be somebody here because there is a house and it looks like the door is open." And suddenly we had a boot coming in. One of the Germans stepped their foot on the pillow, and they started screaming, "come on out of there," and suddenly a rifle was put into the hole, and I came out absolutely muddy, dirty, and my husband came out absolutely muddy dirty, and luckily I have to say they were Austrians. Not that they are much -- not that I understand, I'm not sure, but one of them was an older man. He must have been 40, he said, "how many more are there?" I said, "just the two of us." He became hysterical, it struck him so funny. "Why should you want to stay here and be dirty and filthy. Go get washed and we'll take you to a nice place in Germany." That is how we were actually saved, because when the Germans left, they completely destroyed the Ghetto by fire and by bombing it and by all kinds of things. So, the people who were in the sophisticated bunkers, they choked to death. We definitely wouldn't have made it.

End of Tape #2

Tape #3

A: When you work outside of the Ghetto, you have an opportunity to bring in some more food, because the food was limited in the Ghetto. So, therefore, one of us, when I didn't want to work _____, I didn't have access to anything.

Q: Do you remember there being any kind of qualitative change when the Ghetto became a concentration camp? How that came about?

A: Excuse me, the Ghetto did not become a concentration camp. The concentration camp was in Germany.

Q: I thought that Kovno they enclosed, and they called it an official concentration camp a little bit later on before the liquidation.

A: Pardon, before what?

Q: In November of '43?

A: No, they called it an official concentration -- who called?

Q: I don't know, the history books, the Germans.

A: It was a Ghetto. We refer to concentration camp in Germany, but basically it was different. Here we just lived in our homes. We had homes in Ghetto, despite of the fact that they came around every so often to eliminate a number of population. But in concentration camp, we were completely under their mercy. You lived in their quarters. You got up in the morning, and you were given a little pail with some sort of a spoon, and you got a cup of water. So, it could be called concentration camp, I don't recall.

Q: So, were there any other events that really strike you while you were still in the Ghetto?

A: No, not really. This was the worst that could happen.

Q: Towards the end, when they were trying to liquidate the Ghetto, I guess, what happened to you?

A: Like I said, this is when we hid in the woods in our bunker, and they took us to where everybody was there. That is where I met my mother, and father and brother, because they were already in that large area where they were going to take everybody to Germany or to Poland.

Q: Where was this?

A: This was in Ghetto. In Ghetto there was a large building which it, how should I call it -- they gathered everybody up there, and after they emptied out the Ghetto, they went from home to home, told everybody to go. The streets were full of people, I mean the handful of people that were left. I don't know numbers. And we all went except for us, the two us. We were the last, actually. Most of the people were gathered up already for the last two days while we were busy trying to save ourselves. So, there was a large building and that is where they distributed old people in separate rooms, groups of them, and then took them outside the Ghetto. And then my husband and I, the two of us, were brought to this place. Lucky enough, I found my mother and father, and Ralph found his brother and sister-in-law. So, we all stuck together, and then the Germans -- it was like a parade -- they opened up the doors and said "Now walk." And we walked out from the Ghetto to go to the trains where they took us to Germany because the Russians were chasing them.

Q: Did you take anything with you?

A: Yes, that is what I wanted to say. Yes, you could take something with you, and I had my coat which my father -- I had my coat with me which my father made for me, I mean filled the lining up with mink skins. And we walked through the street, and as my brother walked out, removed his sign, his yellow star, and walked out and disappeared. And eventually we came to these trains, the cattle trains. And we got on the train, all of us, the whole family, and they brought us to Stutthof.

Q: Before we get to Stutthof, I want to understand a little bit what the train was like, how many people were on it what that train ride was like?

A: There were many people, like sardines. Everybody was pushed together. One woman was mad there. She was outrageous. And of course, everybody eliminated there. It was very very bad. It was very bad. It was terrible. How can I describe it to you. It was hell. And I was wearing my warm coat, wouldn't let go of it. And as we came to Stutthof, they told the women to get out, and they said we don't need you. You'll meet up with your husbands and fathers later on. So, my sister-in-law, the two of us got of the train, and I think, I'm not sure if they had transportation -- I think they had open trucks where we were piled in, and we were brought to Stutthof. And then we were told, of course, right away my coat was taken way, and whatever else I had, which was very little, I suppose, because I didn't have a chance to take anything with me. I held on to my mother, and then they told us to disrobe. You know, they had all these tables and young Germans sitting behind it. And they said to us, "Okay, go into this large area and disrobe." I mean by disrobe take everything off. So, here I am next to my mother, hundreds of women, and we had to be totally naked coming in in front of a desk with a bunch of young hoodlums. So, what do you think in a case like that. They are creatures from another planet. There was no planet then, but creatures from hell. Why should I bother worrying about them, whether they look at me. How demeaning can you even feel standing with your mother and relatives and families --my sister-in-law -- and here you're standing totally naked, and they look at you. So, I just stood there, and they just looked at us, and they told us to

go in the back to take showers, and they gave us the uniforms, the striped uniforms, and this is how our ordeal started. This is concentration camp. Then they put us in those bunks which you have in the museum, it's exactly how the museum has it, in those bunks, and I don't know how long I was there, but it was awful. It was totally terrible, because mothers were taking the food of their children, not children, there were no small children. Daughters were eating up the food. I mean people were destroying each other. That was actually their idea. Whoever was weak and who could not overcome really were taking advantage of their own kind. Anyway, I was holding on to my mother as long as I could, and then one day they told us to come out in one of those areas which is similar to fairground, except there was no fair, for them it must have been a fair, and they did the same kind of system. We were walking, and I was holding onto my mother, and she walked pretty well, and she looked pretty good, and they took her away from me. They pushed me on one side, and they pulled my mother on the other side. I ran to my mother, and I was beat up pretty badly, and I was pushed away. That's the last I saw her. Then we were put into open cars, trucks, my sister-in-law and myself, and we were taken to some sort of a --

Q: I need you to say that sentence again.

A: We were put into open trucks, always open trucks. This is why for the life of me I cannot understand how everybody around there didn't know what was happening. They always saw us. The farmers around us, the people around us, they always saw it. And the Germans were showing off or whatever, and they were taking us to an area where they divided us into groups. And there I was with my sister-in-law, and a very young woman about my age, walked over to me and she said, "Do you mind if I join you because everybody was taken away from me." I said sure, why don't you join us. And then about after a half an hour or so, because we had to wait to be distributed wherever they were going to send us, two other woman came over, both of them actually were nurses, a little bit older. And they said,"You look like three nice woman, do you think we can join your group so we can stick together." So, we spent the rest of our time together actually. So, then they put us again in one of these open trucks, and took us to work in the fields, to build ditches for -- what do you call those things -- I can't think of the name at the moment, but it will come to me. So what they did is they housed us in tents, in regular tents, as you see here. They housed about 50 women, and in the middle of the tent was a little stove, one of those wood burning stoves, and they gave us a space on straw which this is -- so the five of us plopped down together in one corner, and we stuck together the five of us.

Q: Where were they from?

A: All of them from Kaunas, and we really stuck together, really stuck it out.

Q: Were most of the other prisoners from Lithuania?

A: Lithuania, yes. This was -- you see we were the last ones to be taken out of eastern Europe, so basically Stutthof was the political concentration camp. So, probably it was just so late in the game that they didn't take us any other place. So there were some gentiles in Stutthof. So, we were taken there in one of the areas, which was kind of in the woods, it was mostly in the woods, where we were digging ditches -- trenches, that is what it is, trenches. We dug very deep trenches, and that is really where the labor was hard, because they stood over you and made sure that you don't even take a breather.

Q: And if you did?

A: Oh, they hit you. They really hit you without any mercy.

Q: Were you hit?

A: I was never hit, because I worked. I told you I just decided at one time, especially when I was standing there naked, that these are devils from some place, and I'm going to look at them as such. So, this was my -- I brainwashed myself. I figured they are not going to bring me down to their level.

Q: So you didn't stay in the camp of Stutthof that long?

A: Exactly. Stutthof, I think they kept -- I was there I would say about three days, approximately. It wasn't long, or maybe a week. I mean time -- I cannot tell you time. It was one thing I didn't think about. But it wasn't long, because I didn't work there. We didn't work there, but the rumors were that they were going to sterilize us all. And we were lucky to get out of there. Unfortunately, I couldn't get my mother out.

Q: Were there any children there?

A: No, but they wanted to sterilize us, because you know women, period. I mean, we didn't have our period. Thank God there was something in heaven, somebody was watching over us. We didn't for two years, but the rumors were flying around that they were going to sterilize all the young women. So, when we finally got into the woods, got up every morning and got our soup and went to work, and we dug those deep ditches, and then it was winter. And it was cold, and I used to break up the ice when I went in. There was a break once in a while, and get into the ice and wash myself because the biggest killer almost, and demoralizer, was the filth. The filth, the stench and the lice, and the five of us decided we were going to try to eliminate it by hook or by crook, because the people around us were unbelievable. Especially older people, also many young ones that gave up. They just didn't care. That was the biggest destruction, the filth, and this is what we -- two things we promised ourselves. We were going to keep our feet covered, and winter was coming, and the snow and as soon as you got sick this was the end of you. They did not tolerate anybody being sick. So, they watched how to kind of decrease the population there. So, when somebody woke up sick, if you went to the infirmary, chances are you'd

never come back, or if you were too filthy. We decided we are going to keep clean, and we did.

Q: How?

A: As I said, we broke up ice, got into the water and washed ourselves, and at night we used to dry our underwear on the pipe of the woodburning little thing. I think we were the only ones who did that. And then, I was the brave one, I used to run out in the middle of the night, when the soldiers were kind of resting or not expecting any kind of movement. I used to run out to -- if we were -- we were continuously being moved from one area to another because we finished one to dig those trenches in another area, then we were moved to another area. And you could see homes not too far away from us. I used to run out and go to the farmers. They used to give me some bread. At first I used to fill myself up with as much food as I possibly could, and then they used to give us loaves of bread, and I used to bring the bread to my four buddies.

Q: You could just sneak out?

A: You couldn't. It was a fence, but it was a tent. There was a large tent, a very primitive kind of a tent and around they had the very primitive kind of wires, which they were not concerned about anybody going to run away. Where would you run, 50 women or whatever.

Q: And the guards were sleeping?

A: It was -- they could have shot me, I'm sure, but as I said, I was a little bit of a daredevil I suppose. I didn't do it too often, but I tried it quite a few times.

Q: And the farmers were--?

A: Yes. They give you a piece of bread and tell you get out of here. They were terrified you shouldn't stay long, that you shouldn't be caught--they shouldn't be caught, not I shouldn't be caught. But they knew, they knew they were willing to give you bread and feed you. I never had any problems. I stopped quite a number of them, maybe four.

Q: They knew what was happening?

A: Of course they knew what was happening. You had to be absolutely blind or live someplace, I don't know.

Q: Who were your guards?

A: Pardon?

Q; Where were your guards from, what nationality?

A: Oh my God, Germans. You never talked to them. You didn't even look them in the eye. You look them in the eye you get beat up.

Q: Did you have a like a block elder or somebody just in charge of your tent?

A: No.

Q: You didn't have that much --?

A: No, no because we were mobile. They kept on moving us. We just kept our nose clean and worked, and that's about it. So the only time I was beat up was when I wanted my mother back. After that, I just figured I'm not going to mess around with them. I'm going to try to stay alive. And then the end came when they decided to take us on the "death march." And they knew, rumors started flying around that the Germans are retreating. The Russians are going to destroy them, so they decided to take us with them. To this day, I cannot understand why. I would really like to know what their -- they didn't have any reason for anything. They just did what they were told.

Q: Did you know that's why they were moving you?

A: Of course, absolutely we knew. And we started the "death march", it's called now. It wasn't called then, because we didn't even think about it. And they started taking us from village to village. We stopped in a bar at every village, and they kept on losing people on the way, especially people who didn't have shoes. And I happened to have a good pair of shoes. Before, this was the most terrible experience of my life -- one of the most terrible experiences of my life. Before we were taken on this death march, they delivered a truck with shoes. Somehow, luckily some German threw me a pair of good shoes. I don't know if he meant me or he meant somebody else, but I grabbed it, and I had a good pair of shoes. And I could see people that we lose are the ones who freeze their feet. It was cold. It was winter. It was in March or February, February I think, the end of February. And we kept on losing them. We came to a barn. In the morning they used to wake us up, and we walked again. They stopped in villages, the names that I happen to have, and one day one of the women who were part of my group said to me, "Why don't I try to go out and see," -- it was after the third village -- "to see if I can get some bread for us. You always are the one who has been supplying us with some extra food. Let me try, except my shoes are very bad. Why don't you lend me your shoes and I'll leave you mine," which were smaller. She had a smaller foot that I did. She left. She never came back. And I got up in the morning when I had to leave, and I looked at her shoes and I said, I'm not going. And my friends say yes you are. And I said I'm not going to die like a dog on the street. Let them shoot me here. I'm just not going because I knew this was going to be the end. You don't walk out barefoot. Now, I just want to tell you about human nature. In the one of the tents where we were, there was a woman who was a loud mouth and a very disliked person, but she always seemed to be able to get more than anybody else. One of those,

you know, and everybody kind of stayed away from her because she yelled at everybody. She was rude, she was common -- I don't even want to call her that. She was a very disliked individual. And I'm standing there with my three buddies, and I said to them I'm not going. She appears from no where, and she said to me, "I have a pair of shoes for you. I have an extra pair for myself." She handed me a pair of shoes. She saved my life. I don't know what happened to her. I've been looking for her for many years. I never spoke to her. I never exchanged a word with her through the months that we worked together. But she saved my life. I put on my shoes, and I kept on walking. Eventually we wound up in the _____, which was the last village of this "death march." By then they knew, the Germans knew that they had lost the war and that the Russians were on their tail. They put us in a barn and that was really -- that was real hell because everybody was dying. I wouldn't be surprised that 85 percent of the people died there because the diarrhea and the stench and the frozen bodies were unbelievable. Every place you sat next to a corpse. And one of my friends I went to school with, actually she was not in the same area I was, this was kind of a -- they decided to gather all the rest of the area of these people in _____. It was like the last step, and she was in a different camp. She came over to me and she said, "Henny you are still walking around. Would you help me bury my mother?" And I helped her carry out her mother, because the first thing they did was make us dig deep ditches because they knew. And I dropped the mother on a pile of bones. And I went back -- I went back to this barn and surrounded by death, except my two friends. One escaped, two escaped on the way. The one with the shoes and the other one kind of also, she escaped. So two of them left, so the three of us, we're still holding on to each other and suddenly we hear voices. They closed the barn doors, it was like 10:00. I remember because we were liberated, it as an hour later. It was 10:00. They closed all the doors of the barn. They poured gasoline around, all around, and they were going to burn the whole thing. The next thing, it was a matter of I don't know -- the next thing, we hear bagging on our barn doors and Russian spoken. And they opened up the doors, and of course, the ones who could, walked out. I was one of them. And my friend, my two friends, immediately ran out, and I don't know, not too many ran out because as I said, I wouldn't be surprised if 15, 20 percent of people made it, were able to walk out. I mean maybe they carried them out.

End of Tape #3

Tape #4

A: I don't remember exactly but all I know is that when we were brought in there quite a number of people, but when we left, there were only a handful who could walk out. So, I ran out. A Russian grabbed me, and he handed me a rifle and he had our guards, these young shnooks, I think two or three of them or four of them, I think four of them, few, because some of them run away, lined up along the wall. And he said, shoot them. He handed me, it was clicked, the whole thing, he said go ahead. He said do it. I held the gun in my hand, and I thought to myself, that's ridiculous. Should I become like them? And I threw away the rifle, and the Russian he yelled to me in Russian _____, stupid.

Q: Did other people shoot at the Germans?

A: No, they didn't. I'm telling you, I was the first one to run out because I walked luckily. So then they took my two friends, I think one of them could hardly walk, so we dragged her, and they went to the village. And the village, at that time, was deserted, because all the Germans ran away. And you could get in any house you wanted to. So, we found ourselves a house. The three of us settled in this house. And the first thing I did, I went to milk a cow. There was a cow in the back, and the cow kicked me, lucky, and she kicked the whole milk out. And if that wouldn't have happened, we would have died, because that was the first poison to drink milk or butter or anything of that sort. So, we opened up the cabinets, and it was Germany there, it was under German occupation, this area. The cabinet, there was food there called _____, the things you put in jars for the winter with the rubber seal, and they had all kinds of fruits, so we started with cook fruits, a little bit. And the next thing my two friends came down with typhoid. I didn't -- I wasn't very sick, but I was also sick, so I took care of them. And then the Russians came. The Russians were in the Army, and they needed women, and they were going from house to house, disregarding anything. That time we decided we weren't going to let anybody in.

Q: How did you know this was happening?

A: You know, that's a very interesting question. You know everything. You really do. It's an instinct. It's an instinct you find out. If your life depends on it or if it's something, you just find out. Probably somebody knocked on the door and said don't let in the Russians, even if they say they are Jews and they want to help you, because they are like animals. So, finally somebody came to the door and kept on banging and banging and started speaking Yiddish, "please let me in. I've been on the front for so many years. I'm a mess." I said, "we're all sick with typhoid. There is no place to sleep." They did not have any place to sleep. They didn't have any place because the houses, some of the houses, were taken up by the survivors which weren't many. And some of them, the Germans still were there. I don't know, but they said they were exhausted and they had to sleep. And he kept on speaking Yiddish and I decided I'll take a chance. So, we let him in, and he happened to be a very nice guy. And he laid down on the floor and slept. He was totally exhausted, and he just wanted to help us and see what he could do for us, and in the morning he left.

And then I took sick, and then the three of us kind of made it, and we decided to keep on going. Now, I don't know -- the Russians, that's right. After we got well, they said they were going to take us to _____. And from there they were going to send us wherever we want to go. Since we are from Lithuania, they'll send us back to Lithuania. And I knew that I wasn't going back to Lithuania ever. So, we came to_____, and we worked there all of us. We actually watched the Germans load ships and boats, and we were actually the drivers. We were guards.

Q: For the Russians?

A: For the Russians, yes. And then I decided, I heard rumors again, they were going to send us -- we were five women, they were going to send us back to Russia, not Lithuania. They'll send us to Russia someplace on one of those farms, and I decided I'm not going there. So, I took whatever I had, next to nothing, I threw it out of the window. There was a guard watching the area where the buildings where we were actually housed, Russian stayed there and people who worked for them. And they had a guard and a gate, and you just had to announce before you go. There was a curfew there. You couldn't leave just whenever you felt like it. But my window faced the outside, so I threw whatever a small bundle out, probably some underwear and whatever, and I just went to the guard, and I told him I'm going to the movies, and he said okay, go ahead. So, I went. I picked up my little bundle, and I ran to the train. And trains were going anyplace, no matter where you wanted to go. And I really didn't know where I was going to go. I said I wanted to go west. And I got on the train, and there were two underground soldiers sitting, and they said they come from Lodz, and they heard that in Lodz there is an organization, an organization was established to find out who survived. It's like what do you call those centers, where everybody sends their family -- but it's a center for all survivors so they can find people whoever tells them who they were looking for. There was no mail. I mean it was really only word by mouth, really. I said okay, I'll go to Lodz. So we arrived in Lodz at 6:00 in the morning, and they wanted to take me to a place to sleep over, and I didn't particularly care for that. So, when I got out of the train, I decided to make it fast, and they yelled, "we fed you with chocolate." They gave me chocolate, that's true. And I went away, and I got on a bus at 6:00 in the morning. My Polish was kind of rusty, so I asked the driver where is the Jewish center, and he said, "I'll take you there." So, I arrived there, and I walked in there and that was around 7:00, 8:00, and I registered, and I told them I want to work for you and they said okay, go behind there. So, that is where I wound up. I was bald then because we were all shaven. And I was wearing a turban usually. And then one afternoon when I got through working, I went upstairs in the common area where there are a couple of dozen women are sleeping on the floor in some kind of makeshift sleeping bags, and I removed my turban. I needed some fresh air, and I walked out in the hall to go over to a friend of mine, and there was my husband. So, he even met me without my turban.

Q: You must have been stunned.

A: Yes, that's putting it mildly because I really didn't know what happened to him, and I was going to Israel. I figured what the heck, I speak the language. I don't have anybody any other place in the world so I might as well go to Israel. And they would have sent me awfully quickly because many Lithuania young people in '37 and '38, and I figured I would try a _____ not a _____, but I will try it, and then I will take it from there. And then my Prince Charming appeared, and it was fun. And then we came to this country. We decided we were going to start our lives all over again. It's no use living in the past because we had nothing to do with it. The world had gone mad so what should we do. It could have happened to anybody. So we're not going to let that ruin us and bring up our children with complexes. They probably have other complexes, but certainly we didn't spoon feed them about our experiences and about the world that everybody is terrible, because there are some decent people in the world. It was just a terrible experience.

Q: When you do think about this, because even though you want to live in the present, you have to think about this?

A: Well, sure I do.

Q: Are there certain memories that haunt you?

A: Except that time when I knew I was going to die without my shoes. That's my worst experience in my life -- that's not the worst, but for personal -- I have never felt as close to death as this moment, never. Because, as I said I always think that things are going to turn out all right. Everybody calls me Polyanna, but I just hope it eventually will turn out all right.

Q: Let me ask you a strange question. How did you feel about being Jewish throughout this?

A: I never thought of it. I never thought specifically about being Jewish, why it happened to me you mean?

Q: Well, I'm wondering did you wish you weren't Jewish? Did you feel more Jewish than ever?

A: No, no I didn't feel more Jewish than ever. I'm going to tell you something. I don't if it has something to do with this. We have a son, and a daughter and seven grandchildren. And our son married a catholic young woman from France. And my friends were telling me -- it was a long time ago 21 years ago -- friends were telling me my god it's terrible. How can you take it? How can you live with it? I went to my rabbi and had a long conversation, and I said, you know intellectually I can understand it. She's a nice woman. That's what he wants, what the heck, who am I am? Emotionally I don't think I can take it but I'll probably take it. And as the years went on and people asked me I said, you know the more we have on our side, the better off we are. So, that is my philosophy in life. The

more people think of Jews as equal people in this world, the more chance we have of not having something like that happen again. Because he was a madman and all his nation went mad. I mean these people went mad and the ones -- there are a lot of nice ones there I'm sure. I'm not going to condemn the whole German population, but the majority of them said they didn't know about it. How could they not know about it, and how couldn't they foresee it, but I'm not a philosopher to try and figure out. But it's terrible that people in power can motivate young people to become so unfeeling, so beastly without any remorse, and they can really turn them into terrible human beings, so it shows you. So, I can't tell you if I felt bad being Jewish or good being Jewish. I didn't think about it much.

Q: Anything else you want to add?

A: I'm glad you are here because I was going to write a book, and I know I'd never get to it. So, I had very mixed feelings when you said you were going to come here. I knew I'd have to go through that ordeal, but at least our family and all our grandchildren and great grandchildren and so on and so forth, if they want to know something about us -- although they all asked through the years, the little ones and the big ones, but we always answered them what they asked. We never gave them more information. But now at least they can go to the museum and press a button and listen to their grandparents if they want to. If they don't want to, just let them be nice human beings. That's all we want them to be, and I thank you for coming.

End of Tape #4
Conclusion of Interview