United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Rifka Glatz
October 17, 1995
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a taped interview with Rifka Glatz, conducted on October 17, 1995 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview 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.

RIFKA GLATZ
October 17, 1995

01:01:11

Question: I'd like you to begin by telling me your name and your name at the time of the war, where you were born, and when you were born, please.

Answer: Sure. I was born on October 26th, '37 in a city called Debrecen in Hungary, and my given name was Veronica Suzannah. Or Hungarian, actually, it's Veronik Suzannah (ph). And my Hebrew name was Wiscolar (ph). My parents came -- both of them from religious homes, and while they were not Orthodox, they still kept very much the tradition, what you would call strong conservatives nowadays. And shortly or a couple of years after my birth, I assume my parents moved to a city that today is Romania called Kolozsvár or Cluj.

Q: Actually, you didn't -- I don't you said your last name.

A: Oh, I'm so sorry. My family name was Moskovitz (ph) by birth.

Q: Do you have any memories of Debrecen or you were too young?

A: My only memories of Debrecen is really my grandparents' house, which I am assuming I visited as a young child of three or four. Came to visit Grandma and Grandpa, and I had uncles and aunts there and spent wonderful times with them. Very pampered, very loved. It was very, very warm house. I remember my grandfather picking me up. They had this chandelier that hanging with little beads at the end, almost like a little skirt. And he used to pick me up so I can touch it and play with it. And I had really a lot of fond memories just remembering the furniture and remembering the smells of the kitchen and sitting around the table and eating and roaming around in the courtyard and playing outside. All of those memories are really kind of in my mind, very wonderful memories of visiting my grandparents.

Q: Did you have brothers or sisters?

A: I have an older brother, who is seven and a half years older than I am. And, of course, my older brother played a big role in my life, especially in those days. There were just the two of us, and because he was seven and a half years older, he had different interests. And aside from trying to pester me because he enjoyed seeing me screaming or laughing or whatever it was, really our relationship was like a younger sibling looking up to almost an adult. He was -- I almost always admired him, and I was in awe of him. He was -- the age differences were so great until we grew up to be adults. In adulthood, now that we are both adults, I consider him my younger brother. Because it turned out that I think I'm the more mature one and he's the softer one. So it's amazing how the roles switch later on in life.

01:04:44

Q: What kind of business was your family in? Did your parents work, what kind of lifestyle?
A: Well, my father came from a little village near Debrecen. He was one of 13 children. There were -- actually, there were 15 children born to that family, and 13 of them grew up to adulthood. And they were of very modest means. My mother came from a much more prosperous background, but at the time of their marriage already times changed for the worse. And my grandparents didn't have what they had before, and so they had very little. My parents got married and for a while, they had a bakery. And then that fizzled away, and that's when they moved back to my grandparents' town, to Debrecen, where I was born. And from there, they picked up, and they went to Cluj because there was work in Cluj. And it turns out that my father in Cluj was just a laborer. They really lived in a very modest, modest life. They didn't have much, and my mother knitted a lot. And I don't know if she sold some of her knittings or not, but really at that time financially they were considered poor.
Q: I want to, I guess, ask you more about Cluj, because you were so young in Debrecen.
A: Right.

Q: Did you have a sense of whether or not there was a strong Jewish community, if your family was friendly with neighbors who were not Jewish? I know that your family was religious, but I'm trying to get a sense of how they were integrated with community was.

A: In the courtyard where we lived, it was kind of an apartment building that the front to the street, was a few stories high. But in the courtyard itself there was like what you would call a townhouse, one-level townhouses today, the attached homes. And it kind of surrounded, went like an L-shape. And we lived in one of those houses. Now, we had neighbors, most of them were Jewish neighbors. But we also had the manager of this courtyard, the manager of that apartment building who took care of the grounds and took care of the property, and he was not Jewish. We were very friendly. I remember playing with the children. I remember them putting up the Christmas tree and me helping hang up the walnuts on the branches of the tree. So the parents were very friendly. We lived in a community where, of course, there were quite a few Jewish families. Not Orthodox Jewish families, but modern Jewish families.

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And yet, my parents were always very Zionistic, and they definitely saw to it that in spite of the fact that they didn't have a lot of money, so to speak, they raised us in a Jewish school. What would be like a Jewish day school today. My brother went to the Hebrew Gymnasium in Kolozsvár, and I was in the kindergarten that belonged to that school. And so he was already in the upper grades, and I was -- just before we were taken away, I was about to start first grade. In the kindergarten, of course, we learned about all the holidays and little Hebrew songs and Hungarian songs and dances and they read us stories. And everything that at that time they taught in a kindergarten. And I went to that kindergarten -- in the school, the children have to wear uniforms. So the uniforms were always navy and a white shirt. A navy uniform and a white shirt. That was the uniform for the

Hebrew Gymnasium. The boys have to wear hats. And I think there was Star of David on the hat, if I'm not wrong. But even if it wasn't, by the time it approached 1943, everybody had to wear the Jewish star, no matter what, on the street. You could not walk out to the street without having the Jewish star sewn on your coat or sewn on your jacket or on your dress, depending on the season of the year. You really had to wear it like a badge on your chest.

Q: Were you aware of any attacks, verbal or physical, on your family or on your brother or yourself?

A: Only on my brother. I was not much aware of anything that was going on outside. I only was aware of the fact that I was totally forbidden to leave the courtyard where we lived. And I was always warned if I every set foot out of the courtyard, to make sure that I have on me something that has the Jewish star on it. Of course, being so young, my mother did not look forward to me setting out my foot outside the courtyard, no matter what. And that's understandable, but that was so impressed on me as a young child that I was really scared to step outside. And I liked to step outside, because when I stepped outside the courtyard in the basement of the building next door there was a candle factory. And I remember looking down there, I was fascinated how they made the candles. How they dipped it in wax with the wicks, you know, up and down going into the melted wax. And I was just fascinated by the whole process. So I looked to sit outside, you know, kind of stoop down and watch how they were doing those things, but I was really carefully monitored. I remember my brother coming home from school, and there was always an upheaval because he was chastised going to school, chastised coming back from school; he was taunted. And I must say, I had a very handsome brother that was not even -- initially was very handsome and the uniform looked great. But there were always -- harangued going to school and coming back from school and fist fights would ensue coming home. And also then in those days, people still rode in buggies and carriages and some buses and various transportation. So the kids really walked to school and came back from school. Nobody had cars, so nobody picked the children up. So it was a natural thing for him to walk to school and come back. And my father was a very ethical and moral man, but to some extent I think was very naive.

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And he felt that it's unbecoming a Jewish young man to fist fight. That this is not something that -- he didn't teach us that, and this against anything that we stand for. And that either you reason or you talk, but you don't fist fight. You are not a hooligan. If you fist fight, then you reduce yourself to the gutter level. And my brother came home one day, and he had somebody's footprint on his navy uniform. Obviously, somebody kicked him in his behind. And my father got so angry at my brother, and my brother was a very mild-mannered young man. But I guess there was just so much taunting that he could take and there on the way, and somebody physically attacked him. And somebody kicked him in his behind. And I think my father added his own hand to teach him not to get into brawls on the street, unfortunately. So, But I remember my brother who was very good at woodwork; he was very artistic young man. He paints and he sculpts and he does woodwork. He's an extremely talented young -- he was an extremely talented young -- now, he's an extremely talented young adult, older adult. I call him young adult, I should really call him older adult. And I remember him fashioning with -- from little wood, you know, handle and attaching a whip to it that was rolled in his hand. That was his protection going to school, so if somebody attacks him, he can whip this out. And that kind of left a very strong impression on me as a child. That and the fact that my father hit him.

Q: So you did become aware at this point that there were problems? I mean, it was different to be Jewish?

A: Definitely.

Q: Can you remember other lessons you learned from your parents? You were talking about not to fight or . . .

A: Not really, with the -- I shouldn't say not really, you know. I think the lessons -- I think the lessons were in spite of all difficulties and in spite the horrendous times, they did not hide who they were. They kept very strongly the Jewish holidays.

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They made sure that my brother became bar mitzvahed at such a difficult time. I remember my brother's bar mitzvah in the big temple; it was almost empty. And I remember standing in the Orthodox synagogues in those days, the women sat on top on the second level and looked down. And the men were downstairs. I remember standing between the railing and watching my brother chanting from his Haftorah. And no matter what, Passover was Passover; Rosh Hashanah was Rosh Hashanah; the Sabbath was the Sabbath. All of those traditions were kept to the bitter end. Nothing was really hidden away, and I think it gave me a sense of understanding and a sense of also some pride. I was not hidden way, all of those things were not hidden away from us. If anything else, it just made me stronger probably and more believing. That you just cannot allow anybody to trample over you.

Q: How much was your regular life, as you knew it, disrupted at that point in Hungary? It wasn't physically occupied by the Germans. How much did life change? Were there a lot of restrictions?

A: There were restrictions on what -- between what hour and what hour you were allowed to go out on the street. Jews were not allowed on the street at every hour, every day of the -- every hour of the day. There were restrictions in terms of how often you were allowed -- between what hour and what hour you are allowed out on the street. I'm sure it was very disruptive to my parents, to my mother. My father, who was still working at the time, and then later on in '43 was taken to a forced labor camp. My mother being alone with two young children. Schools ceased to exist. We were not allowed to go to school. The Jewish school closed, and so we were primarily at home. My brother was very busy. Him and neighbors, they dug up a bunker in the front, in the courtyard, because there were a lot of sirens and a lot of running to the shelter.

01:18:07

And the shelter was really not below ground level. It was like a laundry room type of a thing, where people washed. And that was the shelter. And I remember that that affected me something fierce as a child. I was hysterical every time the siren sounded. I used to cry and scream. I was just so utterly shaken and afraid as a child from all these sounds. And that affected me later on in life, too. Because for a long time when at that point was silent and not screaming, but when we came to Israel and the sirens were going on because of the War of Independence, and there was never really complete peace. There was always that panic of will I make it to the shelter or won't I make it to the shelter? That always ensued, and at times it would just be a siren over an ambulance that sounded like a siren. But once you hear it, it's like it shakes you up completely. So . . .

Q: Did you maintain a relationship with this family, this Christian family that the man, I guess, was the landlord or the superintendent of your building, once things got worse?

A: I think we had a relationship, a cordial relationship in the courtyard. We were never -- the relationship was never such that we -- they came and visited and us, and ate in our house, or we visited them and ate in their house. Those kind of things did not exist. But until we were taken away, they lived there and we lived there. And until we were taken away, definitely.

Q: Do you remember your parents talking about what was going on or how they tried to comfort you, or did they explain anything?

A: I don't remember that any of this was discussed with me. I think my parents probably spoke between themselves, or they spoke to my brother, but none of this was shared with me. I was -- they felt probably that I was too young. And I'm sure those discussions took place between my brother and my mother, especially after my father was taken away to labor camp. He was the man in the house, and my mother kind of gave him instructions in case -- the fear was already there that we will be taken away. We will forced out of our house. That we will be forced to leave. Where? Nobody knew.

01:21:01

But my mother felt at the time that she needs to prepare my brother, because if she's out in the street and something happens, then she gave him instructions how to dress me, how many layers of clothing to put on me. I know that there was knapsack for each one of us prepared on the side to take with us, the necessities, changes of a few pieces of clothing, and eating utensils made out of something unbreakable. You know, one of those enamel dishes, and the eating utensils that we have to eat with and things like that were in the knapsack. And my mother put in -- I had a little baby umbrella. It was just like a little umbrella with pink roses on it, and she put that in the knapsack, too. It was my favorite little toy or whatever, and she put that in. And as she feared, that's exactly what happened. Because she was out in the street when they started rounding up all the Jews, and she had to beg for them to allow for her to come home because she had two children at home. She came back and all we did is pick up the knapsacks, and she took down the Mezuzah from the door. She threw away the casing; she just kept the content, which was a leather parchment about this size. Very long. This is all. She took it with her. Already prior to that, she flushed down her diamond in the toilet, because she felt she's not giving it to anyone but she didn't want it to be taken away from her. And on a nice April day, they came for us.

Q: And this was what year?

A: 1944.

Q: Well, before we move further on, you said that your father had been taken to a labor camp. How did that come about?

A: They just simply announced it's almost like it was conscription to the army, that you have to go. There was no if, buts, and in between about it. They just rounded up all the men, and this was forced labor camp. They were not compensated for it. They were not paid. They made them work, and they gave them minimum food and shelter. And my father was taken away in '43, and during that time he came home twice for a couple of hours, a couple of days. I don't recall. And that was it.

01:23:59

I remember him one Passover sitting around the table in the kitchen and doing the traditional Seder and with the big, white pillow, and my father had some white coat on that was the tradition that the father of the household wore all white during Passover. And then reading the Haggadah and doing this modest Seder, and the sirens started wailing. And at that time, already the bunker was dug up in the front yard in the courtyard, and all the neighbors and us were running, we were running down there for shelter. That kind of stands up in my memory. I remember my father coming home one day, and I think that was when he came home from the one vacation that he had from a labor camp. And I remember him kind of spreading his arm out so that I should run to him. That's it.

Q: When you mention the men being rounded up and you and your mother and brother were rounded up, was this by the Hungarian Police or Army or do you know?

A: It was the equivalent in Hungary, there was an equivalent hooligan troops, just like the Nazis. They were called Arrocross (ph) . And they were just as bad, and just as dastardly, bastardly, whatever you want to call them. And they were just all too happy to help. There was no big qualms about it. They came, they rounded us up, they put us on cattle vans. You know, like a big van, moving van like you would see nowadays. Women, children, older people, they were put up on the van. And I remember walking out of the little apartment -- all the apartment consisted of was a kitchen and a bedroom. That's it. And a little pantry. And I remember the door closing in and them boarding it up. Absolutely boarding it up so no one can enter. And we were taken away to a brick factory in Kolozsvár. The courtyard of a brick factory, they put up little huts. Four sticks of wood with a little fabric and some -- I don't even know what was on top.

01:27:00

And those were the living conditions for the next month for all of these people, who for generations grew up in Hungary. Were born and raised and worked, and, of course, we lived in those huts for a whole month. Minimal food was brought in. If it rained, it rained. If it was dry, it was dry. I

remember my mother opening the little umbrella that she stuck in my backpack, and that was what was kept over my head when it rained. It was just horrendous conditions. Horrendous conditions to see people who -- I was in my little eyes, in my little girl's eyes, just to see the doubts in most of the women and children because most of the men were gone. Taken to the brickyard factory. We stayed there for a month, and from there we were taken to Budapest.

Q: Let me just ask you . . .

A: Yes.

Q: . . . some questions about this brickyard. Were there any sanitation?

A: Probably what was there for sanitation was for those who worked at the brickyard. And I don't recall whether they brought any other sanitation in or how, and what happened, I don't recall anymore.

Q: Do you remember what you did every day? Did you play with other kids?

A: Probably played with other kids in the courtyard, in the brickyard.

Q: Was there any communication with your father?

A: No. At that point, my father was in labor camp. We were taken away. I don't know if the news arrived that we were forced away. I don't know what my father knew. I just know that when we were in Budapest, and we stayed in Budapest for two weeks in a large school, we came away from Cluj, about 300 people, 300 Jewish people. That's children, women and some men. And we were taken away to Budapest, and in Budapest we were joined with about 1,500 other Hungarian Jewish families. I had an aunt in Budapest who disguised herself as a Gentile. She was blonde, blue-eyed, and she was in one of Raoul Wallenberg's safe houses.

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She knew where my father was in labor camp. She smuggled some bread to him, and then we arrived at Budapest. And those arrived, I guess, my father learned that we are there. And he came, he was allowed a few hours to visit, so he left and he came to visit us. And I remember my mother -

- and I had an uncle with us, his oldest brother, begging him not to return, to stay with us. And he said he cannot do it, he has to go back because if he's not going to go back, somebody else is going to get killed because he has not come back. And that he cannot have on his conscience. So they didn't have to worry much when they allowed somebody to leave for a few hours, because there was a threat provided with it, so that he knew that he has to come back. And if that was the last -- I don't even remember that episode so much. I don't remember seeing him, but I know he was there. And that was the last -- if I have seen him then, and I'm sure I have -- that was the last that I saw of him. And at that time, I was close to being -- close to six. Almost six years old.

Q: And you were staying in a school . . .

A: Yes.

Q: . . . in Budapest?

A: Either in a school or the main temple, I'm not positive now. But it was a large, either a large synagogue or a large school.

Q: You said you were there for . . .

A: Two weeks.

Q: Do you have any remembrances of what this place was like or what you were thinking or feeling? Do you have food? Who else was there?

A: We were taken away from Kolozsvár together with my father's oldest brother, his wife, his son, and his daughter. And another sister who was single at the time. And we were all together, more or less. So the only children that were familiar to me at that time were my cousins -- my cousin. Now, she was two years older than me, and her brother was two years older than my brother. So they were sequentially older than us by two years.

01:33:01

And they're the only ones, I know that there are lots of other children, because there was like 500 orphan children in this group that was deported out of Budapest. But I don't remember, I think I

clung very closely to my mother. There was too much chaos, too much fear, and my mother was the barometer. Like for all children, I think mothers are the barometer. You look at your mother's face, and if she's smiling, then you're smiling. And if she's afraid, then you're afraid. And I am sure that a lot of things I have seen through my mother's eyes, or just by looking at her face. A lot of my feelings were connected to this.

Q: Do you remember what you saw or what you were feeling?

A: Probably just a lot of turmoil, a lot of unknown, a lot of fear of getting lost. A lot of that instability, that lack of confidence of what will happen. Where are we going? What's going to happen to us? That kind of a fear.

Q: Maybe what you left behind?

A: I don't even know if that entered my mind what we left behind. It's just, I think it's the fear of the unknown. It's the worry about what will happen.

Q: Was there any communication with your grandparents?

A: No.

Q: You just lost touch?

A: Completely. We didn't know what happened to our grandparents until after the war. When the war ended and people started looking for each other, that's when we found out who is alive and who is dead, and who went back to Hungary and who did not.

Q: Were you -- maybe not -- I don't know -- at the time, were you aware that this transport from the brickyard to Budapest was really a specially arranged transport?

A: I did not know. That is something that I learned about it later. I just later on learned that this was a special group, so to speak. A privileged group, that was gathered together, and they supposedly -- this is something that I learned later on. That I had no knowledge of at all. That this group was gathered together, and they collected everybody's belongings and money and jewelry and whatever everybody could offer, because the Germans needed trucks.

01:36:08

And Kastner, who was a lawyer, a Hungarian Jewish lawyer, dealt with Eichmann and pleaded with him to save this group of Jews to show to the world that what they are doing is not -- supposedly not happening. And because it was towards the end of the war, they were in such terrible need of money that they had accepted it. And this group supposedly was supposed to be transported to Turkey. But instead from Budapest in cattle cars, they took us to Bergen-Belsen.

Q: Do you know how you became a part of this group?

A: Probably because twofold. First, my parents were always Zionists, and they were always active in the Zionist movement. Second, my uncle who was with us, he was a very important banker in Kolozsvár. He was wealthy, and he was well-to-do. And he had more connections, and he put us on the list, together with his family. And I think that was probably one of the most important things. But in this group, as I said before, not everyone had a connection, and not everyone was wealthy, it may seem. There was a good percentage of them who had the money, but they brought together with them 500 orphan children who did not have anybody to speak for them. And so there were many other people in the group, not just those who were privileged to be in the group. And in those days also, there were many movements. There were many organizations, Jewish organizations, that tried to save Jews in every which way they could. And like between all people, there are always differences of opinion. There were those who felt you should not deal with Nazis. There were those who felt you should do whatever you can to save the Jews. There were those who felt that just something bad will come out of it. There were those who felt that this is not the way to go. So even if they knew and they could go on with the group, they did not want to. It was a life that was unknown. Just like Kastner thought that we will all wind up in Turkey, and we wound up in concentration camps instead. And he himself, I think, put his life on the line every minute of the day when he entered this negotiations and traveled as a Jew all over the country for meetings and different things. His life was on the line constantly. His family was just in as much jeopardy as anybody else.

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And, you know, people claim he should have told everybody what's going on. He should have let the Hungarian Jewry know what's going on. The documentation shows that there are some people that escaped concentration camps who came back, and who reported what's going on, who told them what's going on. And nobody would believe them. Nobody would listen. It's easy to be a good judge, you know, after the fact.

Q: Now, you started to talk about how you went as a group in cattle cars, you were sent to Bergen-Belsen.

A: Right.

Q: A couple questions: Did everybody from this school or temple in Budapest go on this transport?

A: Yes, yes. Everybody that was gathered there went on the transport.

Q: When was this, approximately?

A: I tell you, about June. The beginning of June and of May, beginning of June, I would think, of 1944.

Q: Tell me a little bit about the journey. Your family all went together except for . . .

A: I don't remember anybody but my mother and brother with me. I'm sure that my uncle and aunt were there, but I was aware only of them. It was terribly crowded. There were no seats. People were standing, hoarded in. The only thing you could do is stoop down. There was no room in the train. And they had a pail, like what you wash the floor with.

01:41:04

That was the sanitation, that was the bathroom. And it was terribly stifling hot. Cattle cars have small windows. It was just horrendous, and I don't remember how long it took, how many hours we rode in that.

Q: Do you have any remembrance of what the mood was? People thought they were going to Turkey? Did they have expectations what things were going to be . . .

A: I have the feeling by the time they were hoarded into the cattle cars, that they feared the worst. I don't know what they thought really, because I was so young at the time that even if the conversation was going on around me, I think my mind was working in a different direction. Either in denial of what was going on, or my mind went through imagination, you know, what a child imagines or plays in their head. It's very hard to tell; I don't recall back that far as to what I had. On top of it, during this journey I came down with German measles, so I was one sick child by the time I arrived to Bergen-Belsen. And my mother wrapped me up in a blanket that she had for me, a little pink and white blanket. And she carried me with that blanket; I was very small, luckily. Not that my mother was tall, believe me. But I was a small child, and she picked me up in her arms and covered me totally with a blanket. And by the time we got to the gate and there was a walking, marching from the train to the gates of hell of Bergen-Belsen, and I remember -- I don't remember. This is just stories that I remember that my mother was telling me. That they asked her if I am sick, and she said, "No, the child is only sleeping." They couldn't gauge how old I was, because I was small. Being totally covered, they couldn't gauge my age. And at that point as soon as we arrived to Bergen-Belsen, they separated the boys and the men from the women and the girls. So my brother was separated from us at that point, and he was taken -- he was 14 years old at that time. He was separated, he was with my uncle and his cousin. And I was with my mother and my aunt and my cousin, two aunts and a cousin. We were in these huge barracks with the wooden beds.

01:44:02

Everybody sleeping next to everybody on a wooden slat, and barbed wires all over the place. No sooner did we arrive, I think we needed to march out of the barracks to be counted. And this counting went on day, noon and night. They were very meticulous, they constantly counted. I don't

know why it was so important for them, but I guess they wanted to make sure that no one is missing. And the war went on.

Q: Were you able to see your brother and your uncle . . .

A: No, no. Not even through the barbed wires.

Q: Were you mixed with prisoners who had -- who were already there, or were you kept together as a group from your transport?

A: I don't know. Honestly, I do not know. Maybe we were together as a group, I'm not sure.

Q: Did they give you wear uniforms or you wore your own clothes?

A: No. Everybody wore whatever was on him. I don't remember -- I don't remember given uniforms.

Q: Do you remember what the conditions of life were like there?

A: The conditions of life were horrendous. I remember as a child they had what you see today, an outhouse. You know, how you have an outhouse and there is like a hole and everything goes in the hole? I remember like a semicircle, and these holes were there in the ground without any separation. Without any doors, without any privacy. Just like animals. And for some reason, I recall being there. It is so horrendous. I was brought up in such a modest way. My parents were such modest people, and I had never seen adults sitting on a toilet or doing their thing. And I remember somebody either bending down and his glasses fell off their eyes. I remember those glasses falling into the hole. And, you know, that was the end of it. Now, you know, in any person who -- this kind of stuck in my mind. And just understanding of what it means for someone who does not see to wear glasses and to lose them. And my mother glasses since she was a little child, so I know that this -- I know that she cannot -- she cannot exist without her glasses, you know. So that thought left such an impression on me. And the other big impression was when we were taken to the showers. We were taken to the showers, and if you can imagine a fence that is made out of wooden slats that are very tightly attached to each other. We were walking by this fence, and people were screaming. And I remember asking my mother, "Why are they screaming?" My mother said to me, "Because they recognize names that were written on the fence." Now, nobody

had pens or pencils with them, but people bent down and picked up a piece of rock or chalky substance that was on the ground. And they smeared their names in the fence. Or wrote down dates when they were there, in case somebody else will come and recognize them. It's that feeling or maybe that faith that knowing that you may be going to your death, that maybe somebody else will come and recognize your name. Because the entire fence was scribbled with names, and people obviously recognized some names on those fences. Or they didn't recognize, maybe they thought they did. You never know what went on in people's minds, but the fear was tremendous. And we were taken into the showers where everybody had to get undressed. And I remember the horror for the first time in my life, that I have seen adults naked. I didn't even see children naked. I don't remember if I saw myself naked. I was just a little girl, and now I see children and mothers and grandmothers marching around naked into these showers. And people were screaming because they obviously did not think that those were showered. Obviously felt that this is the end of them, but we were showered. And we came out of it, which is so unbelievable that -- that that impression, that horrendous thing, it stays like a picture in your mind forever. And then we were taken back. And the other, of course, the counting that I already told you about, that they marched us out from the barracks constantly to stand in lines and count us, stand in rows.

01:50:01

And the other horrendous impression was when they came with their leather boots and the German Shepherds with them. And bringing the food, which always looked to me like some kind of a dishwater with something floating in it that looked like some burgundy sausage or something. Something disgusting looking in it. That was the food, and a little bit of bread. I don't know, I really honestly I don't know how we survived. I really do not know how we survived. How we survived the hunger, how we survived the conditions. It's like it's hard, it's amazing. I remember also being marched out of Bergen-Belsen about eight months after being there.

Q: I think before we get to that next thing, could I ask you a couple of questions?

A: Sure.

Q: Do you remember, you know, the guards or the people in charge of you? Just impressions of them?

A: Just the uniformed Nazis with the German Shepherds barking just like their dogs. Their mean faces. They were very scary.

Q: They were mean to you as a child?

A: Yeah. Absolutely.

Q: Did you see anybody get hurt or beaten, anything like that?

A: No.

Q: Did your mother go to work in the camp?

A: I don't remember.

Q: Do you remember if there were any -- for fun, were there any . . .

A: None whatsoever. None whatsoever.

Q: I mean, as kid, I'm trying to figure out what you did all day.

A: Just we were in the barracks all day long. In the barracks. We were crying, telling stories, trying to -- I don't even know.

Q: Do you know if there was any awareness of the Sabbath or of any holidays during this time?

A: I don't believe so. I don't believe so. Maybe quietly my mother sang something to me. I don't even know what day was following what day.

01:53:12

There was such a loss of time. I don't know whether they knew really what day it was of the week.

Q: Anything else you can remember about what your life was like there? Are there impressions, things that made you afraid?

A: Just the silence, the guards, the tower of the guards, you know. The barbed wires all around you. Everything is muddy, you know. It's -- that whole environment of a depressed environment, a depression on everybody's faces. Everybody looked very skinny, you know. Everyone lost their

healthy weight. Everyone waiting around to die, basically. I don't think at that point anyone thought that we'll survive or that we will come out of it alive.

Q: That was the feeling?

A: I am sure. I am sure that no one believed that we will ever come out of Bergen-Belsen alive.

Q: Okay. So you were starting to say that about eight months later.

A: Eight months later, we were marched out of the camp all of a sudden. I guess the deal was made. And the payment, the final payment to the Germans was paid, I think, as we entered the Swiss borders in Switzerland. And we were marched out of camp, and I remember that we were marched out by fours, which means they were marching in groups of fours. And somebody in front, maybe there was a row that there were like three people. So this Nazi bastard with his dog was standing there, and pulled somebody forward. And from every line, he pulled somebody forward. So you were feeling that missing person. That happened in the front. And I was on the edge, and I remember pulling my arm from my mother's arm and pushing me forward, one line forward. I was horrified; I was a little girl. I was not next to my mother. And with the force that he flung me forward, I started crying. And it took a while for us to walk away a little bit before my mother asked the person next to her to switch places with me so that she can have me next to her. I remember that horrified moment. You know, you lose all the confidence -- the little confidence that you still have within you, you lose it because you are just thrown in front of your mother. But it was done in such a brutal way that it totally shook me up as a child.

Q: Did they tell you why you were being marched out of the camp or where you were going to, do you . . .

A: Not me. I don't know what they told my mother or where they are taking us. I don't know that she knew. I don't know that they talked about. We were just all marched out of the camp. We were taken out.

Q: Did the boys join you? Did you see your brother?

A: Yes, yes. The men, the boys who were there, they joined us. I didn't see my -- I don't remember seeing my brother until we got to Switzerland, but it's possible.

01:57:06

Q: And this was all the same group who . . .

A: The same group.

Q: . . . from Budapest?

A: Right. The 1.800 people that came with us from Budapest. That same original group of people. They must have struck a deal.

Q: And some of them you hadn't seen for a while in the camp, or you had all been together?

A: We were in different barracks. Some of us were in the same barracks. Some of us were in different barracks. And don't forget I didn't know that many people. My mother knew many more. I was just a little girl. so I -- my world was my mother and my aunt and my cousin who were with me, and that was it. I can't remember -- I don't remember anyone else. My only memory of everybody else is after we have come to Israel, and those that my mother remained friendly with.

Q: Let's stop right here, so he can change the tape.

A: Okay.

Q: How are you doing?

A: I'm doing fine.

End of Tape 1.

02:01:08

Tape 2

Q: Let's pick up. You were marched out of the camp. You were temporarily separated from your mother, and then I guess she joined you in line. Then what do you remember happening after that?

A: I remember being put on trains, a normal train. And riding and arriving in Switzerland. And I remember -- really, the fact that we crossed the border, that didn't not affect -- I don't recall that at all.

Q: You can't recall the ride?

A: I don't recall the ride. What I do remember is arriving to a place that looked like a palace. In my child's eye, I thought that we had arrived to the biggest palace, almost like in a dream. And I remember coming there, and the children were given toys by the Red Cross and being fed and being taken care of. And the name of the place was called Hotel Esplanade. And very shortly after arriving and probably being checked physically and medically and checking for lice and checking to see if everybody who needs medical attention and so forth, very shortly afterwards, they took all the children away. And we were brought to a -- up in the Alps, you know, like into like a farm area for recuperation. And just to get us a little bit healthier after all the ordeal of being in concentration camp for so long. At this point the Red Cross was there to help. The Schlakim (ph) , which are messengers from Israel, from Palestine at the time came to our aid. They were working very hard on receiving the proper certificates to enter Palestine, because we could not enter freely. And some semblance of normal life wanted to return. Now, that's what they wanted to achieve. So they took us into a -- as I said, it was probably like a farm. Almost like a kibbutz kind of a thing on the Alps. And they started process, they started to try to teach us according to the level that we were at, what we were supposed to start. And I don't even remember -- probably they tried to teach us in Hungarian, if I'm not wrong.

01:04:02

Now, in Switzerland we all learned a little bit of German because that was the spoken language in that area of the country. And each and one of us kind of picked up some German language. I remember sitting in the classroom, it was very frightening to me to some extent because here I was away from my mother. My mother was left in this big hotel with a lot of other women who were widowed, and all the children in all ages were gathered together. And teachers were brought from all over to try to teach us, and they tried to conduct classes. And I just remember me sitting in the classroom and totally gazing and not comprehending anything. It was like in a dream, I remember sitting there saying to myself that "This is school," but my mind was totally on other things. I could not concentrate. I don't remember that -- I can't recall if I learned anything. I probably remember just learning just a little bit of the ABCs, the lettering, the beginning of learning how to read. But to tell you that this was a formal schooling that I could recall or I can retain anything, probably very little because of the emotional upheaval that probably I felt as a child. The one thing for sure that none of us got was psychological counseling. That was not in anybody's agenda or even in their -- in anybody's thought that that was needed at the time. I remember the older children putting up a play of David and Goliath. I remember my brother playing the role of Goliath if I'm -- of David. And -- but I don't remember anything else from area, just the fact that there was a lot of cheese, which I hated. There was a lot of milk, which I didn't like to drink. Most people were so happy so see cheese. As a child, these were things that I did not like to eat. I did not like cheese, and I didn't like hard-boiled eggs, you know. I used to choke on them. There are memories of things that I really could not -- I guess I could not tolerate them.

02:07:02

And other than that, really the time in Switzerland passed by, and before we knew it -- I also remember something that really stayed with me, is the fact that the Swiss people did not look upon us kindly. They were not friendly. They really did not like foreigners, and they -- I'm sure that this

was very hard for them to get this many refugees in one of their hotels. And from there we were taken away. I don't know what mode of transportation, in all honesty. Probably by train again to Bari, Italy, and from Bari, Italy we were taken by a boat to Israel.

Q: Okay. I want to just stop you for a minute.

A: Yes.

Q: To see if you can recall anything else about Switzerland. I appreciate that your mind was not on your classes . . .

A: Um-hum.

Q: . . . at this farm school or whatever, but do you have any remembrance of what kind of classes? Did they give you any religious classes, any kind of classes that might help you prepare for living in Palestine?

A: Probably. I don't really recall. I recall other things that were very important. You know, in every classroom, there are children who are the bullies? In every classroom that there is the girl who is the queen and it's amazing. I remember being afraid of some of the kids because they were so demanding and being afraid emotionally from them. I was a very sensitive child. Interestingly enough, I grew in to be quite a strong adult, and even as a youngster life kind of prepared me to become quite a strong individual. But I remember the sensitivity of being easily hurt. I had a lot of worries for a six-year-old child. I had to worry that I'm alone. I had to worry that somebody will demand things of me that I won't be able to give.

02:10:02

I had to worry about my safety. I had to worry about my existence. I had to worry where are we going? Where is going to be home? I had to worry if my father will come back. A lot of those things are constantly on my mind, and school was the farthest thing from my mind. I was really more concerned of how to survive in this kind of a jungle. I'm sure they prepared us. As I said, they had put up a play of David and Goliath, so obviously the themes of tradition and the themes of

Israel and the themes of the Bible were brought back together. And don't forget a lot of these children have studied already in Hungary, and a lot of them went to the Hebrew Gymnasiums or went to other Hebrew schools. They had backgrounds. My brother knew how to speak Hebrew already. Not fluently, but he studied Hebrew. So he knew how to read and he knew how to write and he knew how to speak. I didn't know one word at that point. I was too young. I didn't have that in my background yet.

Q: When you say that you had so much on your mind as a small child, were there things that you remember doing to protect yourself or to just get by?

A: I remember having to worry about what will I give to this girl that I will live in peace? I don't even remember who she was. But, you know, that concern, what could I give her or what could I make for her or whatever from the little that I knew how to make or give or whatever -- what did I have? But I had a lot of worries like that for my little survival. And I was very little physically, too. Not just age-wise, I was very little physically.

Q: But you had other strengths?

A: Obviously. That's very -- that's for sure.

02:13:03

Q: It must have been quite nice to see your brother again?

A: Yes. But you have to understand that the relationship between me and my brother was not the same as siblings. I would never go to my brother if I had a problem. Or if I had a fear, I could not talk to my brother at that age. For me, he loomed larger than life. He was a symbol, until I got married. It's not just as a little child, a six-year-old child, there was this age difference between us. We lived together for a very short period in our lives, and then we never lived together again.

Q: Just maybe because he was also at this farm, you felt a little bit more protected since your mother wasn't there?

A: I don't think so. Because he was busy with his age group. He was busy with his own survival. He had his friends from school. It was different, and I don't know, he loved me very much, but I don't think that he understood or that I understood what I needed or what he needed.

Q: Now . . .

A: We were never taught as children to communicate verbally and to express our emotions and our feelings or to speak up about them. This is all many, many, many years later, you know, that one learns through life to speak up.

Q: While you were at this farm, did you mother come and see you from time to time?

A: I don't remember that. No, we as kids I guess we were taken back to the hotel every once in a while. I don't remember my mother visiting. That I don't remember at all.

Q: But you did go to the hotel?

A: I think we went to the hotel and we saw them. It wasn't such a big distance, but it's a very big distance if you don't have with what to go. But I think every once in a while, we were taken back to visit.

Q: Did you make friends there?

A: I don't remember.

Q: Now, were you aware that ultimate plan here was to get to Palestine?

02:15:51

A: My mother -- you know, honestly, my mother wanted to go back to Hungary to look for the family, to look for her father -- for my father. To see if he is alive, and my uncle said no. My uncle was the oldest authority, and he said, "There is nothing to go back for. Hungary's finished. It's done with. We are going to Palestine, and when we get there, we'll look for them. And if they're alive, they'll come out. And if they are not, we are not going back there. That's it. There is nothing to go back for." Luckily, my mother listened, and so we went to Palestine.

Q: How long do you think you were in Switzerland?

A: Eight months. It took a long time for them to be able to obtain the proper certificates to enter Israel.

Q: Was there any consciousness of the war ending in Europe while you were in Switzerland?

A: I am sure.

Q: But not for you?

A: Not for me. I just remember one thing in Switzerland that was amazing. You know, when I said to you that a child always gauges their mood according to her mother? And I remember in a crowd standing outside, it was like on the top of the stairs. My mother was standing, and I was standing next to her. They were listening to news on the radio out loud, and everybody started crying. And my mother was crying, and, of course, I immediately started crying because as soon as she cried, I cried. What happened? What happened? What happened? And my mother telling me that President Roosevelt died. I didn't know who President Roosevelt was. But the news that he died created such a sorrow in everybody, if they would have only known how little he has done, if anything at all, to save them. But everybody was so sure then that he was doing his utmost.

Q: Is there anything else that you can recall about those eight months in Switzerland? Or who took care of you?

A: No. I don't even remember who took of us. I'm sure there was some older individuals who took care of us. I don't even remember so much the room or the bed where we were. It was definitely 1,000 percent improvement over Bergen-Belsen, and it took me many, many years to go back to Switzerland.

02:19:04

And I visited with my husband Switzerland, and we were in Montreuil, I said to him, "I think the hotel is supposed to be in this area." And I said, "I wonder if this hotel still exists, and if it exists, is it big or is it small?" Because, you know, when you look as a child, some thing looks humongous and you don't remember. Well, I called my brother in Israel and asked him, and he said, "Yes, in

Köln (ph) above Montreuil is Hotel Esplanade. It still exists. You go out there." Well, we took the train, which is like a Venicula (ph), it's almost like a mountain-climbing train. And I cannot tell you -- I just sat there and cried. I can't explain the emotions. I didn't way one word, but as the train climbed higher and higher, the tears just rolled down my eyes. And when I got to the hotel, when we finally got there, indeed, the hotel was a huge hotel. A very elaborate hotel, it's not a wonder that in my eyes it looked like a palace. Because, as it turns out, the lady who greeted us at the place, she said, "This hotel was once upon a time the winter playground for all the royalties of Europe. They used to come here for ice skating and for skiing and for all sports activities, winter sport activities." And this was really like a palace. And she showed us a movie about the history of the hotel. She says, "You are not the only refugees. There are many of them who have come back to visit through the years." It ceased to exist as a hotel nowadays. During the war they wanted to tear it down because nobody came to the hotel. And then they kept it as a refugee center. The refugees that were brought out of the war passed through this hotel. Now, they showed us this movie, and they showed also movies about all these royalties used to come and ice skate and ski over in this area. And after the war, after the refugees have left, again they wanted to tear down the hotel and they decided to keep it. And now they use it for an organization, a worldwide organization, for sane armament. These are people who are obviously pacifists who come there for conferences during the summer.

02:22:01

And they live very much like on a kibbutz, because they cook and they share in the cooking, washing the dishes, serving, taking care of the rooms and so forth. Everybody really shares in the upkeep. And I don't know for how long, for a month or two months during the summertime, they keep it for conferences like that for sane armament. But, indeed, the hotel was a very elaborate, large, large hotel. So it wasn't just in my child's memory, but as an adult, it was quite interesting to see.

Q: Now, you were somehow taken to Bari?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: Do you know how long you were there before you got on a ship?

A: No.

Q: Do you -- was there a large group with you?

A: The entire group, the original group, were all taken Bari. Put on this Viadole (ph), I think was the name of the boat. Viadoran (ph), if i'm not mistaken was the name of that boat, and we were taken with this boat to Palestine. It was not a luxury boat. I don't even remember how many days it took us to sail from Bari to Israel, to Palestine at the time. But when arrived to Palestine, I remember getting off the boat, and we were given some nuts and I think an orange. My two hands filled up -- one orange filled up two hands. And I remember that my brother, my father's youngest brother, he was only living relative who lived in Israel. He left to Palestine when he was very young, and he was there from the age of 19. So he had went in the '30s to Palestine with his wife. And he was like the welcoming committee. But we were taken from there to Aclite (ph) , which is a British concentration camp kind of thing, in Palestine itself. In Aclite (ph) you were disinfected and checked for health, for this, for other reasons. And we were the first alia (ph) after the war to arrive to Palestine that had permits to enter. I think every boat after us were taken to Cyprus.

Q: What month is this?

A: This was in September. So we were -- September 3rd, 1945, to Israel.

Q: The mood on the boat must have been pretty good.

02:25:00

A: I am sure the mood was good. The conditions on the boat were not good. And I don't know how good the mood could have been on the boat, because they were going to a place that was unknown. They were going to a place that was not free. They were going to a place where it was under British mandate. They knew darn well that the relationship between the Arabs and Jews was not good.

They were hoping. And don't forget there were a lot of women without their husbands with two children, three children. Generally two or one, who came together with nothing. The clothes on their back, no money, no husband, no prospects, no jobs, no profession.

Q: Do you remember your impressions when you got off the boat?

A: My only impression was it was sunny. It was a country full of light, you know. And seeing an orange made a very big impression on me. And in a very short time after we were in Aclite (ph) , we were dispersed. I was sent with three other children, give or take one girl, a brother and a sister. She's a year younger than me; he is two years older than me. And another young boy. We were sent to one kibbutz. My brother was sent to another kibbutz. My cousin was sent to a third kibbutz. And her brother was sent to the fourth kibbutz. So we were not together.

Q: And your mother?

A: And my mother stayed in Haifa in a hotel for women. So this time we were separated for good for a long time. I was taken to Halba, which is close to Jerusalem. My mother stayed in Haifa. My brother was taken to Neva-Tan (ph), and my two other cousins to the French kibbutzim. And that was -- that was the end of that. And at this time I found myself in a kibbutz, all by myself.

Q: Were you scared?

A: I'm sure. How comfortable could I have been? At this point I was already seven and a half years old. Think of it, I was seven and a half years old, so I missed first grade; I missed second grade. And I just started first grade. That was the first time that I remember going to school and starting to learn how to read and write. On top of it I arrived to a kibbutz that nobody spoke Hungarian. I spoke very little German, and I definitely did not speak Hebrew. So the communication was very difficult, but like all children, you quickly learn -- you quickly learn a new language when you are forced to learn it. But again, the communication with my mother and father was very difficult, because I didn't know how to read and write. I just started to learn how to read and write in Hebrew. My language skills could not have been great at that time. And like all first graders, you can imagine how well I wrote and how many spelling mistakes. My mother did not know how to read Hebrew, and I didn't -- I couldn't read her Hungarian letters to me.

02:29:06

And nobody could read them to me either. So it was very difficult. My brother wrote to me in Hebrew, which I couldn't read either. But that could -- at least somebody could read it. So it's a little bit comical, but it was a quite difficult communication. And I didn't see my mother very often because the circumstances in Israel were so difficult at that time. These were the times of the uprising, this was pre-War of Independence. Traveling was not easy. People traveled with armored vehicles, and they traveled only in caravans. You didn't see a car riding freely on the road, you were only safe if you traveled in caravans and in armored vehicles. So really I think I saw my mother twice a year during this while period, and I was there for three years.

Q: What was your life like then?

A: The kibbutz life was okay. I mean I'm sure it wasn't easy for me emotionally, but it was okay. There was a lot of -- I think I can attribute there was a lot of caring. I think we got something, somebody cared about us. I think we got that sense -- that sense did come through. I think going to school every day, and from very early young age they teach you to work a little bit to keep you busy, and to keep you a productive individual. It kept us very busy and very active and not allowing too much, you know, for day dreaming. And every child was assigned to a family. Unfortunately for me, I was assigned to the shoemaker in the kibbutz, who came from Poland who was a widower, and who had a daughter a year older than me. So I was not assigned to a family where there was a mother and a father. I was assigned to a family that there was only a father, and since he had a daughter who was a year older than me, he just didn't know how to be a parent for both of us. He was a good man, but, you know, if you have a choice between your own daughter and somebody's else's daughter, it's a big difference. So, but that was the way it was. But, generally speaking, I think there was lot of positive things in the kibbutz. A lot of, you know, a lot of things that were taught that were very positive and very nice, and the holidays were always celebrated in a very nice manner.

02:32:01

This was not a religious kibbutz at all, but all the Biblical holidays were celebrated on -- in a freer way. That you felt -- I felt very much that I belonged, so there was a lot of caring. I know I missed my mother, I know I fantasized a lot. I fantasized a lot about my brother, and that is strange, that's even more. Because here he was already he went into the Navy, and I always worried whether he is going to get killed or is he going to be alive. And so my brother, again, loomed larger than life in my eyes in those days. And I seldom saw him, very seldom. So really with the exception of living together in Hungary, we never again lived together in the same house.

Q: Were there a lot of other children on this kibbutz who were essentially in your predicament? Who had come here, who had been separated from their . . .

A: Yeah. Yes. In fact, that's what I said to people, you know, at times when they asked me. I was one of the fortunate ones, I had a brother; I had a mother. My friends, the two brother and sister, they had a mother and they had each other. Then the children from Tehran came. These were children from Russia and from Poland, primarily Polish children, who came without a soul. They lost their parents. They lost their siblings. They lost their uncles, their grandparents, everything in the war. They were sole survivors. So at that time, as much as one wanted to feel sorry for oneself, I think there was always somebody who was in a worse position than we were. And these children came with no one, and the kibbutz absorbed them into families. They became their families, literally.

Q: Were you conscious of that at the time? What were you thinking about?

A: I was very conscious of it at the time. I was always very -- very, very sensitive to other people's feelings and other children's feelings as much as I was sensitive to my own. I was very sensitive, very caring, and I think I also rationalized it was a very good way of protecting myself. I rationalized, so -- there are people that have less than you, so it's okay. It wasn't the end of the

world. I think that's what kept my sanity, that I was able always to see maybe the better side of things instead of the worst side.

02:35:08

I just feel I was very fortunate as a child, because, in all honesty, when I think back that none of us ever, ever got any psychological counseling or help or group session or -- it wasn't even talked about. Everybody just went about their lives going on, it really didn't come back to haunt me until I had children of my own. I didn't realize the feelings that I stored inside until I had my own children. Because, you see, as I saw them growing up and I realized the ages, the circumstances, that's when I had a difficult time to reconcile with what I went through. Because you see your children, how vulnerable they are at such a young age and how needy they are, it's very hard. On the other hand, it made me very strong. It made me able to slough off a lot of things and be able to face life.

Q: Did you develop close relationships in that kibbutz?

A: I'm sure I had friends. How close relationships, nothing that was overwhelmingly comfortable, you know, in hindsight.

Q: Did you have fun?

A: I had a good time. I had a pretty good time. I had a good time, but I think I had -- I was also a very serious child. I probably carried a lot of worry on my little shoulders, I'm sure of that. I remember I always had a recurring nightmare. It turned out that a siren was going on and everybody was rushing for the shelters, and I couldn't run and I couldn't walk. My legs wouldn't carry me. And I was crawling on all four in front of the dining room, and everybody was passing me by.

02:38:04

And I just -- my legs were paralyzed, I could not walk. So I know where it comes from. But for many years I had this recurring nightmare, same thing all over again.

Q: What do you think you were . . .

A: It was my fears of survival.

Q: Do you think that you generally felt safe finally in this kibbutz?

A: I felt safe, but I know that I also probably put up a good facade. I remember when Israel was declared a free state, we were sleeping. I must have been -- 1948, I was 11 years old. And we were awakened, we were sleeping, we were awakened all to come out and dance, and everybody was very happy. And they announced at the same time that Haifa was conquered, and I became hysterical. Because I did not understand that it was conquered by the Israelis. I was positive that my mother is finished with, because that's where she lived. I was positive that if Haifa was conquered, my mother must be dead. So that happy occasion where everybody came out and they were dancing, and they brought out from the freezers the little apples that they were saving for a special occasion, I don't know. And everybody was really in such a joyous mood. It took me time from being awakened in the middle of the night to understand the consequences and the ramifications of this news. So that wasn't easy either.

Q: Why don't you just kind of tell me briefly what happened after? You were on the kibbutz for three and a half years. Palestine became Israel.

A: Right.

Q: And you were at that point rejoined with your family or with your mother?

A: My mother remarried. I never met the man that she remarried at that point. My mother just announced to me in a letter that she has remarried, she has gotten remarried and that they would like me to come home.

02:41:05

And it was good news and bad news for me. It was good news because finally I'm going to be with her. It was bad news to me because in my little mind I probably conjured up this image that if my mother is going to remarry, I have decided in advance that I'm going to hate this individual, and I will not -- he cannot replace my father. At that point my mother knew very well that my father is no longer alive. And she consulted with my brother, who was in the Navy, who was also closer. The Navy was in Haifa, so they saw each other quite frequently. And she introduced the man that she was going to marry to my brother, and my brother was all for it. But nobody consulted me, and nobody introduced me. I was far away, I was not near Haifa. And so I was brought back to Haifa from the kibbutz, and I left the kibbutz. And I came back to Haifa, swearing to myself that I'm going to really hate this man and I'm not going to obey him. This was what went on in mind at that time, but really in no time at all I realized what a nice individual she married. And he was a survivor also, who lost his wife and two children in the war. And his oldest daughter was my age, and she had my middle name, Suzannah (ph) . And so he was quite a nice father to me; I think he loved me dearly. And that had a very good effect on my life. He was a good family man. He was extremely, extremely sensitive. But at the time that I came back to Haifa, I felt estranged from my mother. I mean she was important to me, but I no longer felt that need to be that close. Or I think I had also a lot of anger in me probably that was never verbalized. But by the time I got back to Haifa, started school, and then things were done in very haphazard way.

02:44:10

I arrived to Haifa, I was at that time in the fourth grade. And they decided since I was older -- and I was probably a fairly decent student. I wasn't a super student, but I was good, average student. They decided that oh, it's time to make up a grade. So I went for half a year in the fourth grade, and in the middle of the year, I transferred to the fifth grade. I think they would have done much better if they would skipped fourth grade altogether and put me in the fifth grade right in from the start, so

I will have an equal opportunity to start at the same level. But by the time I started fifth grade in the middle of the year, I was totally lost again. And this time they lost me from math forever, I was not a big mathematician. And I think from multiplying and dividing, I got into fractions. And I never learned the basics of how to deal with fractions in the beginning of the year, and I think it was extremely difficult. Extremely difficult. I got into a very good grade. I got into a good grade in terms socially, it was very compatible and terrific. But academically, especially in math, I had a lot of difficulty that dragged on and on. I always needed a private tutor. Somehow I could never catch up to what I lost.

Q: So you finished school. You grew up in Haifa with your newly constituted family?

A: Right. I grew up in Haifa. In the years that I was growing up, elementary school was through eighth grade. There was only elementary school and high school. There was no middle school. So you went for eight years to elementary and four years of high school. And when I finished elementary school, the eighth grade, it was by my mother's recommendation that I should maybe look into a technical high school, where I could learn a profession and I can finish my high school diploma. At first I didn't want to hear about it, but then I decided that that's a very good idea. And I went and I looked at a school, and I liked it very much. It was very creative, and I was a very creative child. I guess I had a lot of creativity in me that I didn't even know that existed. And I went to the school, and that's where I really blossomed, because we learned a lot of things that were of interest. You know, we learned how to sew and how to embroider and how to knit.

02:47:02

And a lot of the creative handwork and crafts -- excuse me -- and I succeeded quite nicely in the school, and that helped me a lot. By the time I finished my high school diploma there, I had a profession also. And I went back for an extra year for a teacher's seminary, so that I became an arts and crafts teacher. And soon thereafter, I got married. As soon as I finished really my teacher's seminary. Finished it in late June, and in August I got married of that year.

Q: Well, I don't know if this question is a little bit off the point.

A: It's okay.

Q: But how long did it take you to feel like kind of on solid ground again after all the uprooting of your life in Europe, and then even your first few years in Israel or Palestine?

A: In Israel itself?

Q: You know, I'm sure there was a point at which . . .

A: I think through high school, I felt fairly confident. Solid ground, never. I don't think -- I'm on as solid ground as anybody could ever hope for now in my life. But I will never feel on solid ground in this lifetime. I feel -- I don't dwell on it. I really don't dwell on it, because I like to dwell on the positive versus the negative. Even as a child, Passover time, they used to all bring up everything that happened in the Holocaust. You know, they talk about the exit from Egypt and, you know, our forefathers coming out of Egypt. And they started in about what happened, how they rounded us up, how this one walked through Italy. The other one went to concentration camp. You know, everybody brought up their story, and it used to drive me crazy as a child. At that point, I said, "We are already in Israel. We are already in freedom. Why do we have to talk about it?" I realized why we had to talk about it, of course. And many times I blamed myself because of that, that I didn't ask all the questions while my parents -- while they were alive. I didn't want to deal with it, so I did not ask all the questions.

02:50:03

And really I was in Israel the other day, and I sat with my brother and my cousin who was with us in concentration camp, we were discussing it. And everybody has just almost awakened to ask the questions, and nobody has parents anymore to ask them from. While they were alive, none of us wanted to deal with it. Okay? So, yes, you say you're confident, and maybe you pretend to be confident, I don't know. But I -- as I said, I dwell on the positive, and I think about, you know, in a positive way. But to say I'm on solid ground, I'm not afraid that tomorrow somebody's going to tell

me to pack up and move. But I will never say that it cannot happen again. There are times when we joke or we sit around and talk, and, say, in case of emergency -- I use it, in case of emergency, something disastrous would have happened to us. Let's see, what can we do? What are the skills that we have? What is it that we can do to survive? It's always in the back of my mind somewhere. God forbid that I should have to. I'm not looking forward to this.

Q: I'm wondering whether the lack of absolute confidence or security is part of the human condition.

A: Very possible.

Q: Certainly tempered by your experiences and what you went through.

A: Right.

Q: And then also, many years in Israel, which is -- you know, which has been a volatile place to live.

A: It has been a volatile place to live, but on the other hand, I have to tell you I think if I would have grown up in any other country but Israel, I would have been emotionally a much sicker person. I think there was something in Israel that I have to give a lot of credit to. There was something permeated in the air, in the atmosphere, in the surrounding. I always felt safe in Israel when I was growing up, in spite of all the goings on. And I think what -- there was something permeating the air, and I think the message that I heard was we love the children. They are our future.

02:53:05

You are important. And I'm not talking me, physically, as an individual, but rather all the children. The children were cherished, not just by their parents, but by the neighbors. By the people on the street. There was something healthy in the air. There was something health going on, in spite of the pain, in spite of everything else. In spite of the fact that there was no psychological counseling and no group therapy and no this and no that. Maybe the group therapy was that they allowed us to grow up, to be children as much as possible. That you were in the youth movement. You were

encouraged to participate. We were encouraged to dance. We were encouraged to enjoy ourselves. There was something very healthy going on in the atmosphere that gave us some confidence, even if it was a false sense of confidence by some, I don't know.

Q: But felt some of those...?

A: Yeah. I felt safe. I felt safe.

Q: You talked a little bit about when you made the transition from the kibbutz to Haifa, how you felt distanced from your mother and you felt angry. Had you a few questions. Had you by necessity developed your own kind of strength and independence, and almost in self-defense, were you angry at your mother?

A: Maybe my mother wasn't -- you know, it took me a long time to grow up, to realize, to understand the circumstances of her life were not easy. She was not the most communicative person. And there were instances, I think, especially one that I recall that I was greatly disappointed by her. She was supposed to come and visit me on a kibbutz, and there was only one bus a day that came with the caravans. And I was waiting and waiting for her, and she never showed up. And don't forget, there was no place to call. I mean there no telephones. There were no -- the grocer and some other -- the pharmacy had a telephone. Nobody had phones at home. So you couldn't pick up the phone and say, "Dear, I am sorry I couldn't come. This and this happened."

02:56:03

So I had to wait for the mail to arrive as to why she didn't show up. Well, she didn't show up because she traveled from Haifa to Tel Aviv, and she had a few hours to kill. And she visited a friend, and she missed the bus. And I couldn't get over it. I couldn't get over it. I'm not sure that I have gotten over it, because obviously I still mention it. And my mother, may she rest in peace,

she's dead since '79. That kind of a thing, it remained with me. That maybe I felt it was more important for her to visit her friend. I know it was not, and I'm sure that she was sorely disappointed that missed the bus. I can imagine her feelings. But in those days, you just did not communicate and say, "You have no idea how sorry I am or how upset I was, that I didn't -- and I'll make it up to you." Whatever. The facts were stated, and that was it. My mother didn't -- she was a sensitive person, but she didn't know how to communicate in a sensitive way. And so things like that and some other little episodes that caused, we had a good relationship with each other, but it wasn't a close, close warm relationship. I hear sometimes people talk about their mothers, how much they miss them and how much -- how close they were. How devastated they were. Everything, you know, because their mother passed away. I was very hurt when she passed away. I loved her dearly. I wasn't devastated, I hurt for her. I hurt for the life that she had. I understand her. And in a way, I have forgiven for this or that little thing, you know. Our lives, the circumstances were horrendous. I would not have wanted to be the mother in those years. It was much easier to be a child. Much, much easier.

Q: Let's stop the tape.

End of Tape 2.

Tape 3

03:01:01

Q: You know, I think it seems that when your mother didn't show up on your kibbutz, it must have been very, very frightening because you had already lost one parent. You had been separated from your mother from time to time.

A: What that meant in those days, it's not the same thing. It's not something that you can even comprehend in terms of your daily life today, because it wasn't the missing of the bus or the -- the pain that went with it was so overwhelming. The disappointment was so great, because you were a child alone in the kibbutz, and I probably have not seen my mother for six months. And she just did not show up. And it wasn't that she could come back with the next bus that will come the following day. Because she had only that weekend, she had to go back to Haifa because she was working. She was alone, she needed to make a living. So the comprehension of nowadays where you could pick up a phone and you can call, and so what if she missed not coming? So she will come next week. That was not there. When she missed that bus, there was this child that was still standing there waiting for her and conjuring up the imagination of being hugged and kissed and loved. She just didn't show up. And in the end, it took another six months, it wasn't so simple for me as a child. I didn't have somebody to tuck me in and hug me every day. So the disappointment was horrendous, and it obviously had to be horrendous if I still speak about it at 58 years old. I should have gotten over it long ago, but this explains a little bit that I'm trying to think why was that little bit of estrangement between us. It wasn't an estrangement, we were friends in some ways.

03:04:06

But in some ways, that warmth that we had for each other on my part changed. Something changed in formula. I guess she was needy in one way; I was needy in another way. It's hard to explain.

Q: Maybe you could summarize for me what happened after high school. You got married?

A: I got married in 1957. August '57. To a young Israeli-born individual whose parents also came from Hungary, but they were in Israel before the war, in the '30s. And so there was a sabra, and my husband right from the beginning spoke about the fact that he is -- he wants to come to America. Because he felt that there was a future, there is something that he -- he felt the need to go. That he needs to go, he needs to explore. He needs to find himself. And, of course, I never took him seriously, because neither one of us came from homes that could afford this luxury of going anywhere. And I really didn't think we'll ever come to America, but so I let him talk. But little did I know that at that time, I didn't know my husband well enough. Now, I would believe him, but in those days, I did not. And he really made arrangements. He had an uncle in the United States in New York, and he made arrangements through a friend who was in New York to arrange for the papers and for his uncle to loan him the money to come to the United States. And once we'll get here, we'll work and we'll give him back the money. And within six months, we were in the United States. So little did I know what I hit me. We arrived in New York, and we worked in New York, the two of us. I worked in a sweat shop sewing doll clothes, and my husband who finished the technical high school just like me, went to work as a tool and die maker in Brooklyn, New York. And we were looking for a way of solving the situation. Our friends talked us into teaching Hebrew school.

03:07:00

I had a teacher's certificate anyway as a teacher, and my husband decided to try it. And we got a job as Hebrew school teachers in Schenectady, New York. During the summertime, not to remain in New York for such a long time, we went to -- we got a job in a camp. It's called Camp Ramah (ph), which is a Hebrew-speaking camp. And really that was wonderful. We spent the summer there, we

learned a lot. And during the winter, we taught Hebrew school. And at that point, we have decided that there has to be a purpose why we came. We could not just leave Israel, leave our friends, leave our parents, leave the home, and spend some time teaching Hebrew school. That wasn't enough. So Simon started seriously studying for his SATs, and trying to learn by himself how to do -- how to take the tests and how to score. And a year later, we felt that Schenectady, New York is too isolated a place for us. This is just not -- wasn't the right place for two young people. We were very, very lonely and alone there. And after spending another summer in the summer camp, we got a job in Quincy, Massachusetts, which is south of Boston, 15 miles south of Boston. And we went to teach there in a very lovely congregation, and Simon applied to BU and was accepted as an engineering student. And so our life was set. We both worked full-time as Hebrew school teachers, and Simon went to school. And he graduated within four years, aeronautical engineering. Then once that was done, we moved to New York. At this stage of our lives in 1964, we were married about seven years or so, and we really -- already beforehand we really wanted to have children, start a family. I couldn't have any children. And so as a result, we started to look into adoption which was impossible. In Boston they had the blue laws. Only Jewish children can a Jewish couple adopt, and you could not adopt a child out of your faith. We went to New York, we applied again for adoption. The situation was very similar in those days and very, very difficult. So Simon worked for Grumman Aircraft for two years, and I went back -- I left the Hebrew school teaching, which was a good job and wonderful.

03:10:04

But I really desired a more creative job, and I wanted to design dresses. Just really what. I learned, and I was a dress designer for a children's manufacturer in New York. When we realized that we will never be able to adopt a child in New York, two years later Simon looked for a job in California, Los Angeles. Everybody told us that it's much easier to adopt children in Los Angeles, and that's the place for us to go. And so we took off, literally took off. Simon got a job through the

Wall Street Journal with Litten Industries, and we arrived in Los Angeles, total strangers again. The wandering Jews. We arrived in Los Angeles, we did not know a soul. I think we were in motel when we applied for adoption through the Los Angeles County of Adoption Agency. And we started working: Simon at Litten; me as a dress designer. Worked very hard, the two of us, to make end meet. And nine months later we got our son, our first child. And we named him Terrence, a nice Irish name. And we gave him a Hebrew name, Alonim (ph) , which is an oak tree. Nice and strong. And actually we call him Terry or Alonim, depending on what the mood is. And today he's 28 years old, he's married. He lives up in Vermont with his wife. And he has no children, and I don't think he desires to have any. Later on, we adopted a little girl, and we named her Corey Tamar, but actually she's called Tammy. So she's not using any of formal names. Everybody calls her Tammy, and she's 24 years old. And she's engaged to be married, and she's finishing her Master's Degree in social work at Boston University. And a year from now in October, she'll get married to a wonderful young man who is at Yale Law School. And the two children really -- the two children with us formed our little family. And we raised them in California partially, and then Simon got a very good job over here in Washington and we moved.

03:13:00

Terry was four and a half years old, and Tammy was seven months old. And we moved to Washington. So I arrived with two little kids in a brand new area. Again, not knowing almost anyone. But before long, you know, we made friends, and we realized really that it doesn't matter where you live. It's the friends that you make in the place that counts. Every strange place is strange at first until you make some friends. And now we have so many friends, we don't have time for everybody. And we live out in Potomac.

Q: I guess you learned to be very adaptable.

A: Yes. Absolutely.

Q: Because you had been uprooted . . .

A: So many times. I have moved so many times that it's really hard to count already. Even within the city, you know, you live in one dwelling; then you move to another and you move to another. And you go to summer and you come back and forth.

Q: What were your biggest surprises when you arrived in New York? Was it what you expected?

A: No. No. New York overwhelmed and scared me. Number one, we arrived to New York in February, which is not the nicest month of the year to arrive. Second, the dirty snow on the ground and the dark brick buildings which I was not -- my eyes were not used to. All the buildings in Israel are painted white or off-white or, you know, they are light colors. And I'm used to this tremendous sunshine shining on top of these bright buildings. I felt closed in, it frightened me. It really frightened me. It took time. Not a long time because we had to bounce on our feet, and we had to start going. And we didn't have two pennies to rub together, two cents. And if I tell you I used to go to work, I had ten cents to go on the subway one way. In those days it was ten cents. Ten cents to go down to work, and I had ten cents exactly to come back. And on Saturdays, the train stopped somehow on a different avenue. Same street, but different avenue. It didn't stop -- the train didn't stop in the same place. I remember being very confused and overwhelmed, and I was ready to leave the subway station. But I wasn't sure where I was, and I -- in my little broken English, I spoke to the police officer. And I said, "Are you sure that it's here? Because if it's not here and I cannot get to work, I have only ten cents to go home. And I won't be able to get there."

03:16:01

I remember him putting his hand in his pocket and giving me another ten cents, just in case. Which was very nice.

Q: Was a New York or the United States culturally shocking to you? Just the way people lived -- or treated you?

A: I didn't go too much into the culture. I just was overwhelmed, for instance, surprised. We arrived to Simon's uncle, who was from Hungary, and his wife was also from Hungary. We arrived

and they were eating and watching television. I found it terribly rude. You know, I couldn't understand this. I could not comprehend this. Because, first of all, when we left Israel, they didn't have television so that's one detail. But second, when guests or somebody -- stranger came to the house, then you sat and you talked to them around the table. You didn't look at television. I mean the cars and everything, everything was a bit overwhelming at first. But in our own modest way, you know, we scaled things down. We knew how to look inward and to know what we could afford and what we cannot afford. I mean it wasn't that difficult for me to say -- we were not needy as much. You know, we could easily say, "Well, we're not going to buy another skirt or another pair of pants or another shirt, because we just can't afford it this year. It's okay, we'll do it next year." And it next year came and we couldn't afford it, we'll say, "Well, that's okay, we'll do it the following year." But both of us were very grounded, and we had very strong priorities. We knew where it's at, we knew we had a goal. Once we decided that we have a goal and Simon has to go to school and we are going to make it, not matter what, we always looked at the right things. And to be very honest with you, we have many friends who came from Israel, and most of them got some help from home. We really did it on our own. Our parents could not afford to help us. We helped our parents, we used to send money home, too. Especially Simon's parents, because his father was ill, and he could no longer work. Looking back then, we didn't think it was not fair. We did not think that it is overwhelming -- we didn't think we were that unusual. We really took it that this is fine, and everything that we did we felt, well, this is a step -- just a little step better than what we had before.

03:19:05

Every little success or every little achievement that we achieved, it was great. Both of us are very optimistic people, and we really always felt that our cup is more than half full.

Q: After fleeing Europe for Israel, did you ever feel conflicted about leaving Israel?

A: Very much so. I felt so conflicted about leaving Israel, I never liked, for instance, my Hebrew name, Rifka, that I go by. I felt so conflicted that I purposely did not use my Hungarian name, which I happen to like, Vera. It's a much easier name to go by in the United States. My family calls me by that name. But I was so proud that I came from Israel that I said no, I'm going to use my Hebrew name; I'm not going to use -- I totally eliminated my first name even as a middle name. I felt very, very bad that we left Israel at that time.

Q: What -- is there anything that you can think of that really got you through all these early difficult experiences? Any sort of survival skills? Any special strengths or courage?

A: I think primarily it was the courage to bear, to try, to ask. To -- not to be afraid. To -- the worst could happen so somebody will say no to you. I wasn't that afraid of rejection, or at least I thought that I may not take it that personally. Especially on things that were not emotional. You know, to dare a little bit. That's not to say that I was that courageous or that -- I'm sure that I had my fears, and I had my uncertainties and my feeling of not belonging in certain places. It really takes time to belong to an area or to belong to a community, or to belong anywhere. A lot of people, a lot of Israelis are here for many, many years, and they love living here and so forth, but they feel a certain sense of not belonging. I no longer have that. I know that I have an accent. I know that everybody can immediately detect that I was not born here, but I'm not afraid to speak my mind.

03:22:02

And I feel totally comfortable in the United States. I feel very much at home. I don't have those conflicts anymore. Because you have to make up your mind, it's either you belong or you don't belong. If you don't belong, at least we have a free country. Nobody's holding a gun to my head. One can pick up and go back, and over there I speak without an accent. But I feel totally comfortable here, and I must say that maybe with one or two exceptions that I don't even want to recall or I don't even remember, I feel that I have always been treated fairly in America. I really

don't ever feel uncomfortable or not belonging or that somebody made me feel -- or was anti-Semitic to me. I know it exists. I mean nobody is blind to the facts of life.

Q: Do you think that your strong grounding in religion was important to you throughout all of this?

A: Absolutely. Absolutely. I'm not a religious person, but I sent my daughter to the Jewish day school, because I felt that she needs that grounding, too. She needs to know. I started with my son, we took him out, which I later on, I regretted. But that was because they did not have a school established yet, and I didn't see in my blurred vision, I didn't see that that will come. And it was just really too difficult physically, the driving back and forth, back and forth to school. So he went to public school, but she went to the Jewish day school. But I tried to instill in them all the values of Judaism, because Judaism to me, it's not how religious you are; it's a way of life. It's how you live your life. What kind of a person you are. How you treat other people. How you behave towards another person. What kind of examples you set for your children. That's what Judaism is for me. It's not just a religion, it's really a way of life. And I could not be anything but Jewish, no matter what. I'm very proud of being who I am. I have no problems with myself.

03:25:00

Q: Are there certain images that you haven't mentioned that -- that you have mentioned, that 50 years later still haunt you from the years of the war?

A: No, not anymore. Not anymore. As I said, now that the children are grown up and they're wonderful, and I have a family which I adore, not anymore. I think when I raised them as they grew up, a lot of the things that I did not deal with as a child came back to haunt me. Came back to bother me, came back to -- that I needed to talk about. And for a while I went for help for that. All the things that happened, all the things that I was telling you about, being in a kibbutz and being with -- and the early childhood, and the fears of childhood of being in camp, and being taken away from home like this, and being uprooted in such a rude way. Another thing that I have to tell you which I forgot completely and that's something that you ought to know, you remember when I told

you when we left Hungary, my mother took out the parchment from the Mezuzah? She carried it to our concentration camps with her, and she had it in Israel. She never put it in a case and she never hung it on the door. And while she was alive one summer and I visited, she gave it to me. And she said, "One day when you have a home of your own, you should put it on your door." While I had a home in California, I never put it up. I had a home, two homes, here in Potomac, a townhouse and a house. I never put it up. And we finally moved to this present house, and I said, "This is it. This is the time to put it up." I don't know why all these years, I did not. I said, "This is the time that we are going to dedicate this Mezuzah and we are going to put it up." And actually, I have a very good friend who is Rabbi Wallberg from Aziz, Israel. And when I told him the story about the Mezuzah, they surprised me and they brought me a very -- I said, "I'm looking for a Mezuzah that is large enough for this parchment. It's so long." And he brought me a beautiful marble Mezuzah, and we dedicated the Mezuzah inside, indoors, not outdoors.

03:28:06

Because it was too precious for me to hang it outdoors. I have a smaller one outside. And so we hung that Mezuzah, and I'm sure that one day I will give it to my daughter. This is the family inheritance. That's it. No more, no less. But it's an important inheritance.

Q: Let me ask you sort of a strange question.

A: It's okay.

Q: The fact that you were part of really a very privileged group to get out of Hungary . . .

A: Right.

Q: . . . even though you had to make an ugly detour.

A: Right.

Q: You got to Switzerland and you got to Palestine safely.

A: Right.

Q: Did you ever feel a little bit guilty about that?

A: Not the least bit. Why should I feel guilty? Because I survived? Thank God that some of us survived to tell the story. We could have all died just the same. And you would have never had me sitting here telling this to you. I'm not apologetic. I think that he deserves all the kudos in world.

Q: Kastner?

A: Yes.

He got a raw deal. And now they are commemorating a forest in his name. He got a very raw deal. His daughter got a terrible deal. And, you know, it says, "He who saves one soul is as though he saved the world." He saved 1,700 souls. What does he deserve? He put his life on the line every day during that war, and he put in jeopardy everybody's life. He tried his best. I cry for all the people who did not survive. My father did not survive. I have aunts and uncles and cousins who never came back. People with broken lives. If he would have died, would it have saved them? Thank God that some of us survived. Whether it's me or somebody else. I should feel guilty? I feel sad that there are such human beings in this world that are this inhumane, that are capable of murdering without reason, killing without reason, and hating so much.

03:31:04

You know, it's amazing to me that we who really have gone through so much with capacity to love. I don't have the capacity in me to hate. I only have the capacity to be compassionate for somebody else, whether it's a person like me or somebody else, a different color, a different race, different religion -- I don't care. And I'm not alone, I know that most people are good. We brought it upon ourselves? I don't want to hear this. There are too many decent human lives lost, too many beautiful people. Not just them who died, but the potential of what they could have become and the families that they could have brought up to this world. Not the least bit.

Q: This is your only question. During childhood which was really disrupted, do you now, having thought about this for a long time, see that it took a toll on you? Or that it maybe, the reverse,

strengthened you, but that you see sort of a long-term impact on you and how it affects the way you live today?

A: You know, when I raised my children, I -- maybe I was a little more overprotective of them than sometimes maybe would have been healthy, I don't know. I live very well. We did very well for ourselves. Simon went into his own business and he did very well. We live a very charmed life now. I don't have financial worries. I don't have to worry about working or not working anymore. In fact, it was very funny, I stopped at Bridges of Georgetown today, and a young girl, maybe 18, she comes over. She says, "My, you look nice today. We skipped work today, didn't we?" she said to me. And I thought to myself -- I didn't answer, but I thought to myself it really takes a certain audacity, first of all, to turn to a customer to assume. And I really wanted to say, "Actually, I'm not working. I don't have to if I don't want to."

03:34:05

I worked plenty throughout my life, but I was thinking it to myself. On the other hand, I don't ever take anything for granted, and I never forget where I came from. And I always think that I know where I'm going, but I never pretend that I was born into this or this was just something that came to me rightfully so. I really appreciate every day, and I thank every day for what I have and that I'm able to give instead of receiving. It's a great feeling.

Q: Anything else you would like to add?

A: Well, the only thing that one can add is that I hope throughout this experience, I'm just afraid that it's only those who are already human beings and who already are kind and already are understanding are the ones that will look at these tapes or that will take the time to study it or to learn or to go into the museum. But if it can change one hard heart to be compassionate to a fellow human being, it was all worth it. To put it on tape, not to live it -- not to have lived it. To put it on tape. It's really one just can hope that we -- always I hope we learn something from it, but I'm not sure. It always worries me when the statement of hatred come out. Whether it's from this end or

that end, it frightens me. All the extremes who have no tolerance for somebody else who's a little bit different than you are, it really frightens me. So one can just hope for the best, and I think a lot of education needs to be done. A lot, a lot of education. That's all that I can add.

Q: Thank you.

A: You're very welcome.

03:36:55

This family photo of my grandparents on my father's side and their 13 children were taken probably in the late '20s, early '30s. My father is the second one from the left at the top row. My grandparents are sitting between two of the little children. They actually had given birth to 15 children; 13 survived to adulthood. And some of them survived the war, and quite a few of them perished during the war. This is a picture of my grandfather on my mother's side, Egnot Blythe (ph). He was the father of my mother. He gave birth -- or his wife gave birth to eight children who all survived to adulthood. And actually, five of them survived the war. Three of them with their families died during the war. This a picture of my mother and father, Irana Blythe (ph) and Wilmoth Moskovitz (ph). This is on their wedding day in Debrecen, the year approximately 1928. This is their wedding day. They actually look like a handsome couple. This is a picture of me. At that time, my name was Veronica Suzannah, and I'm standing in front of the tree. What you don't see in this picture, actually my father was standing behind the bushes, looking at me. And I'm all dressed up with a little outfit that my mother knitted. My mother always knitted little outfits for me and different things, and I just loved to wear them. So there I am with my little doll and myself. And the city is Debrecen, and I must be here about three years old. This picture of our family was taken in 1942 in Cluj. This is our family: my brother who is seven and a half years older; I must have been close to five years old in this picture. Andy my father, Wilmoth; my mother, Irana and my brother whose Hungarian name was Tibor and his Hebrew name is Hyne (ph). This picture was taken in the apartment building that I lived. This was a neighbor, a young Jewish girl, who I played

with quite a bit while we lived in Cluj. And you can see me dressed in like a little navy uniform and an apron that was very much the fashion of the day, and that's how I was sent to school. I had various navy dresses that looked like little sailor dresses in various colors. But that was the fashion, and, of course, a big bow in my hair. And she's doing her homework, she was older than me. I was just pretending. I was still in kindergarten, I didn't know how to read and write. But that picture remained, and she never survived the war. That family never survived unfortunately. This picture was taken in 1945 in Switzerland after we were liberated from Bergen-Belsen, and it depicts the background of Switzerland, of course. And my brother, Tibi, myself and my mother standing in front of a beautiful fountain in Switzerland. That was just before we were taken to Bari, Italy and from there to Israel, to Palestine. This picture is of me and my brother, Hyne. This is already we changed our name to Hebrew names, and this photograph was taken in Israel, I think in 1945 or '46. My mother had us pose specifically so that she can send back pictures to surviving relatives in Hungary so they can see that we alive and we are well in Israel.

Conclusion of interview.