United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Rose Klepfisz
October 18, 1996
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PREFACE

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ROSE KLEPFISZ
October 18, 1996

Tape 1

01:01:03

Question: Morning, Rose.

Answer: Good morning, Joan.

Q: Tell me what your -- where you were born and what year, your birth date, and what your name was at birth.

A: I was born in Warsaw, July 22, 1914. My name was probably -- I don't know exactly -- Rachel Rozka. I was never called this way, always "Rozka" I was called at home.

Q: And what was your maiden name?

A: Perczykow.

Q: Can you tell me something about your family, your parents?

A: Yes. My father was a watchmaker, my mother was a housewife. We were six children: five girls, one boy. I was the fifth one. And, and eight years later, my younger sister was born unexpectedly. So, we're six. My older sister was a teacher, the second one, she finished the commercial school. The third one was in fashion, hats. My brother finished vocational school, was electrician. And I was the fifth one. And then the youngest one.

Q: Can you give us names? What was the oldest named?

A: Sure. The oldest one was Genia, Anka, Guta, Beniek, myself -- Rozka, and Sala, which was later called Krysia. She didn't like the name Sala and she called herself Krysia. The atmosphere at home was very, very lovely, really. I was for a long time like a mascot, for eight years I was the youngest

one. And really the oldest one, Genia, the teacher, she really raised me, so-called. And Anka use to take me all the way to the theater, to the opera, all over whenever she went with her boyfriend. I was wondering why, but this was that. I was always with them.

01:03:59

And they really gave me a lot of meaning, how to grow up. But Genia was the one who gave me really the education, and she was my, my role-model, really. I was later on, for my younger sister, I was her role model. I was really raising her up.

Q: And what was your relationship to your mother and father if you were so close to your siblings?

A: Very warm, very warm. My mother used to say, later on, "You were my best child." I was like my mother -- very organized. She was sewing for all of us, for all of -- she was very good with her hands, and so am I, up to now -- not exactly up to now. And father was a little distant because he was making a living for all of us. He passed away 1927, when I was a young child still. The old ones, education meant a lot to all of us and we tried. Even after he passed away, I was the one who couldn't go to gimnazjum.[1] But my older sister, Genia, she arranged for me all the teachers, you know, the tutors. And I could pass the exam externacult (ph) in the Ministry of Education -- the course, the course through matriculation. At the same time I was taking, I was also tutoring children to make some money, and we usually the Polish language and arithmetic. My sister always sit in school, and there were many children who needed help and education. And this was -- we always, you know, many, many boyfriends came to my sisters. It was always lively and pleasant. My mother was very hospitable and always had something for the people who came in, the gathering.

[1] Grammar school (Polish).

So, it was – we were a very happy family. Difficult later on after my father passed away, but we kept together.

01:06:21

Q: Did your mother work after your father died?

A: No, no.

Q: So how did you get along?

A: The children were working or we -- they -- were everywhere, grown up and we always, they always so posted to home. And little by little, when they got married, you know, they always provided the rest of us with money and we all supported the family until the, the war broke out.

Q: What did you like to do as a kid?

A: I did a lot of -- first of all, I was reading a lot. A lot of reading. And this was good because of my sister, you know? She led the road to it. And then I played, Potsy took hold -- yes, Potsy, the street.

Q: What is that?

A: It is, you know, we jump from -- on, on the sidewalk, we jump, and so on. All kinds of things, you know, plays and running. Ball, of course. Playing ball. And then I joined the Ha-Shomer ha-Tsa'ir.

Q: How old were you when you joined? Do you remember?

A: Very young, very young, you know -- about 14, 15, something like that. And then we went even for camps and learned Hebrew, and I spoke very well Hebrew, of course. We had some kind of a leader from Israel who didn't let us speak Polish at all, just Hebrew. And I didn't have any difficulties to see a Hebrew play or listen to a lecture. He was very intensive about that and very

serious. So, I had always my days filled. And home work, first of all, homework, you know, I had to do because my sister was very strict about it so that I can matriculate later on. And this was that. I went to Maccabbee also. Maccabbee is a sports club, a Zionist sports club. I was very good in it -- jumping.

Q: What kind of sports did you do?

A: Gymnastic.

Q: Yes?

A: Yes, the regular Gymnastic. But this was for a while, you know, one of the, Ha-Shomer ha-Tsa'ir. We went to Hachszara. You know what's a Hachszara?

Q: No, explain it to me.

01:09:01

A: You go -- the whole group goes to a farm and we work on the farm, preparing to go to Israel. And we worked very hard. It was about two years I went, summer time, to the Hachszara. Then I realized that I'll never go to Israel so I never left my family. I stopped being a member of Ha-Shomer ha-Tsa'ir. And I joined the sport club, Jutrznia. This is under Bundist auspices. And I was very active there, different committees. This is where I met Blum, Abrasza Blum, the father of Oleg, who is supposed to speak now at the conference. And, and because they had also a group, a dancing group and I loved dancing. And our instructor was one of the best, she was instructor in a ballet school just like modern dancing with Martha Graham. This was the style. And she was our instructor, so I joined this. And in this, I became one of the best, also—and the solace I got. We had

once a year, we had performances and this is under the Bund auspices. It was. It was marvelous. I loved every minute of it.

Q: Is that the first time you were dancing, doing modern dance? Or had you done it before?

A: No, never. This was in Jutrznia. I learned it in that group under this teacher.

Q: Do you remember a particular role that you took?

A: Oh, this was Chopin's waltz, very, very soft things, and it was the march of Mendelssohn's, you know? Many, many of them. My partner is still in Australia, she's still there, yeah. So this, you know, this was what I did.

Q: Rose, tell me --

A: -- At, at the same time, also, I was working in the library. Also this was the Bund library, under the name of Groser. Groser was a very famous Bundist, you know, leader from Bund. And under his name was the library for mostly workers over there. And -- a tremendous library -- and I worked there as a volunteer and cataloged and, you know, categorized the books, where they belonged. Sometimes I was helping out people who give me something to read, something like that.

01:12:06

Q: So, you were a teenager then, you were like 14 or 15 then?

A: No, I was older. This is -- I'm going through it, the years.

Q: Can I go back a little bit? Your sisters and brother, were they all Bundists?

A: Only one sister wasn't; she was a communist -- that's Guta. She married later on, also a communist one, a lawyer, Rosenfeld, Buziek Rosenfeld. The rest were all Bundists. And my mother, who used to go to also to the meetings of the Jewish, the Yidisher Arbeiter Froyen, you

know, Jewish workers, a woman, to the meetings. But my father wasn't around at that time, already, you know.

Q: Were there a lot of political discussions in your house because of this?

A: Yes, it was. Because of my sister, you know. We never were fighting, but, "What you doing? What you doing? What? What?" you know, this kind of things. Particularly my brother, he was very strong about it. And Anka too. Anka was, still in Australia now, she is sick and her husband, Bachrach, passed away long ago. But they were very strong Bundists, very strong. And my brother and my older sister and her husband. It was a Bundist, you know, atmosphere at home. And I somehow, also when I stopped with Hachszara, I was never a member of the Bund. But when I went with Michal, so this was already, you know, I was going more in this direction.

Q: What do you mean when you say it was a Bundist household? What would that mean to somebody, do you think?

A: To somebody? Politically, we were, you know, not religious. Traditional, all the way through the holidays, even when my father passed away. We came always together and observed Passover when my father was alive. He had to have God and everything but, you know, not in a religious way. But traditionally we were. And politically, our per -- this is where we stand, voting and demonstrations and something like that.

Q: So it was very activist in a certain way?

A: Yes. The whole family was very active.

Q: And you spoke Po -- Polish?

A: Polish, yes.

Q: Amongst yourselves?

A: Always, when we turned around from mother, father, we spoke immediately Polish.

Q: And what did you speak with your parents?

A: Yiddish.

Q: Um-hm. Were they upset that you were speaking Polish?

A: No, no, no, no, no, not at all. This was a way of life, our friends know that. This was our way of life.

Q: Rose, after your father died, and you're a little bit older, I mean you are no --

A: 12, I was 12 years old.

Q: But still a kid, I guess. And there's things going on in Germany and, clearly a few years later, in 1933, when the Nazis take over, are there discussions among the Bundists or in your household about this?

A: We read, we read the newspapers, but it could never touch us, you know, so directly. We always stood and read the newspapers and then looked at each other about it, but it didn't touch us so, so directly we were going on with our normal lives.

Q: People often say that –

A: I –

Q: Go ahead .

A: Go ahead.

Q: No, no, no. Go ahead.

A: I remember that even my sister -- the oldest one, Genia, the teacher -- she came home and she says, I think it was '35 or '36, that The Birobidzan, you know, is looking for teachers and so on and she says, "I am thinking about it," and we all screamed, "No, no, you're not going anyplace." So this is, you know, how we, we were together, really.

Q: Did you feel antisemitism in Poland?

A: Of course we felt it. Of course we did. All the time we did, you know, that we used to go -- I wouldn't go by myself any other area, you know, unless the same -- but we were afraid of the boys who were throwing stones when they saw the Jews and so on. And, first of all, it was already 1938 Kristallnacht, and this was in 1937, 1938 was the ghetto benches(ph) at the Universities, so we knew about it. We did something for demonstrations, but life was going on.

01:17:33

Q: When you were younger, however, in the '20s and in the early '30s, there was a big separation between Polish Christians and Jewish Poles, yes? I mean, did you have friends who were Polish, non-Jews?

A: No, no, no, no, not at all. First, I was in Ha-Shomer ha-Tsa'ir, then I was in Jutrznia only with Jewish people, no.

Q: So your school was Jewish, where you went to school?

A: Yes it was -- but not Jewish -- it was a public school, in Polish, but mostly were, were Jewish kids. This was most -- there were fights between the boys. But we constantly, you know, they would play ball in a certain places and they came, the skotzim,[2] and they called them, you know . . .

Q: What did they call them?

A: Skotz, skotz, yeah. This is the Polish young boys, and they were throwing ba -- stones and they were just fighting. I remember that my brother use to take me to a ball game, not an official, but the boys were playing among, among themselves. And he always held, was always holding my hand and took me to, to look at it and I was sitting in a corner watching it. They always laughed when he brought his little sister.

[2] Gentile lad and/or impudent boy (Yiddish).

Q: And girls? Were there problems with, with girls, among, among girls? Or was, or was it usually the boys?

A: Usually the boys, usually the boys, yeah. But I never had, at that time, Polish friends. Always among ourselves. Particularly, I'm saying, Ha-Shomer ha-Tsa'ir and then Jutrznia. And I was so, you know, busy with the library with this.

Q: Did you have particularly favorite books?

A: I read everything. I read all kind of literature, you know. The Scandinavian, the Russian, American Dreiser. I remember, you know, Mann. I read constantly and there is a lot of Polish literature, good books, even one got the Nobel Prize -- Reymont, for his three volumes, I think it was, *Peasants Working.*[3] This was tremendous, you know. I read everything.

Q: Did you go to films?

A: Yes, we went.

Q: Did you like that?

A: I liked, I liked. After the war, particularly, it was so many Russian films, you know, coming, but I always went, went to see films. And the theater, the theater was a very great part of my life because of my sisters, you know. They always shlep me all over, you know, to see the museums and they gave me really a very good basis, you know, cultural basis.

Q: So it became part of the norm -- normal part of your life?

A: Right, yes.

01:21:01

Q: Did you ever act?

[3] Wladislaw Stanislaw Reymont's book is actually titled *Clopi*, which is Polish for "peasants."

A: No. I was playing -- we went playing, you know, that, *Sleeping Beauty*, made little play, and we were seven, eight, nine years old., we played. Then we charged five cents for the, for the other kids to come and take a look. No, but no, this wasn't – dance was my…

Q: Had you thought about it professionally?

A: No. Guta was extremely talented. She went to, you know, school, the film school. She even made herself a name, the studio gave her a name: Geri Pik, Geri -- Guta, Pik -- Perczykow, yeah. But she was excellent. I remember her once sitting in a -- being at home as a young woman and many of her friends came, boys and girls, and she was reciting for them. She was reciting a poem about the French Revolution. And I was sitting in a little chair in a corner --you know, she let me in, in a corner listening to her. And she said something, she said, "General Galifé," and I said, in Polish, "Niech ci kozas morde zje," meaning "Let a goat each your face," but it was a rhyme. She got so angry! She threw me out! I went to mother, and mother, keeping me in the back, she said, "Leave her alone, leave her alone, you go back." But this was what's happening always, gathering at home. It was a very warm atmosphere. But acting? No. She was the one who was really, I was very sure she would be an excellent lawyer. I think she was the most talented than all of us, the most talented. She was very, very round, you know. She knew a lot, she read a lot, she performed and she is in the fashion, you know, hats. She had something in her soul.

Q: Was Michal your first boyfriend? Do you want to tell?

A: No. Do you have to know?

Q: What?

A: Do you have to know, you know?

Q: You don't have to say.

A: No, I had, I had -- Ha-Shomer ha-Tsa'ir -- was a photographer. I still have photos, photos of him, you'll see. And he was very excellent photographer, an artist photographer, really.

01:24:00

He made beautiful pictures. And I had a whole album, but during the war I gave it to our maid. She was later on so-called, you know. She was taking care of buildings, and I gave her the album and she got scared later on and she burned it. This is the only thing that I took out but this is how it was. No, was a very nice guy but then came Michal, you know, and I met him in the Jutzrnia.

Q: Can you tell us about it?

A: About him?

Q: Yes, about him, how you met him?

A: Oh, how I met him? I don't know, he probably saw me before dancing or whatever, you know, because he had the rights, he was from the board of Jutzrnia, and that was in an academic already, the Politechnikum,[4] and he used to come up and look at the whole class, you know, of dancing. So, many people came, you know, up, so what. And then he was after me and one day we went, the whole group of us went on sleds around Warsaw and he came, he was skiing. And he came at that time also, I don't know how he found out we got there, I don't know, but he show me where we are going down with the sleds, you know, so he went with the skis. He wanted to throw me out from the sleds. I was furious. I was screaming at him; I wouldn't let him and I was running for a long time. I didn't want to, I had a boyfriend, you know. But this is how it happened. And then I, you know, cut off with my -- it was Adam Rubin. He was a marvelous guy, really. I don't want to – Michal was very romantic, you know. He always explained to me the skies, astronomy, which I had nothing; I

[4] Institute of Technology (Polish).

didn't know anything about it. And took me for long walks, for miles, you know, through, through bridges, to the other side of Prague, Prague to the other side. And this is how it started. But he was really amazing how he can, he always make you feel good. He was great optimist and Bundist to the last, you know, drop of his blood. I won't disbelieve in it, in a better world and socialism, that it will come. This is what he was and he took me by that, you know?

Q: And did you believe it, too?

01:27:12

A: He made me believe it. He made me believe it. I was always more re- realistic than he was. Anyway, we had two things: he was a, you know, scientist, I was literature. He wanted to know about the books, he use to call me "Mala,"[5] meaning "petite." Never called me by my name. He picked up his arm and I could walk under his arm, he was tall, handsome. And he used to say, "Who published this. What was the name of it? Open your drawer and take out the card, take a look." So, she told him. I remember. He was very unusual.

Q: Were you about the same age or was he a bit older?

A: He was a year older. He was 1913, he was born, I think I was born the same day as he was -- April the 17th, yeah.

Q: So when you first met you were 17 or 18 years old?

A: Well, I met him probably in 1931, so how old was I? I was…11 and six…18 years old; probably something like that, yeah.

Q: So you went together for how many years?

A: Oh, we went together for about five years.

[5] From malénki, meaning small or minute (Polish).

Q: Did you, did you live together before you got married?

A: No. How could I? No.

Q: Was he close with your, the rest of your family and you with his?

A: When my mother heard about that and she saw us a few times from afar, he took me home, and my mother was upset. She said, "Why do you have to go with a Polish guy? Don't do that!" It looked like, you know, this is the way he could, you know, go through of the, the war, like that. Because looked, blue eyes and blonde, you know. But he was close with my sisters, we use to come to each other and, yeah, it wasn't a long time after all. But when we were going together, he use to come, when I was sick, he used to come home and visit me. He brought me flowers winter time when you couldn't get anything. He came in with flowers.

Q: So it was a very romantic relationship?

01:30:02

A: He was always romantic, this is what I'm saying. Even his whole, you know, death wasn't a realistic one. Absolutely, how do it, you know, what he did. He was always romantic. Idealistic, he believed, you know, in a better world, that he can do that, uh-huh. This is how it was.

Q: What was your marriage like, your, your, your wedding?

A: Oh, got married only with my mother and his mother and father and I was at that time, I think, she was working in the hospital. She couldn't go. He had to go the next day, he had to go to Bialystok because he had to oversee something, you know, that they building for drying mushrooms, you know. He was engineer; at that time he was working, he was going to school and he was working, and so we went to the Rabbi and we went first to the civil, we had to go, and then

to the Rabbi, or the other way around, I don't remember if they were the same day. And he left the same night, but later on we went on our honeymoon to Paris, with the world wide, you know, exhibit…

Q: The Worlds' Fair?

A: The Worlds' Fair, yes. And for a honeymoon, for a whole month. His Aunt was working for the Institut Pasteur and we were living with her, the same street, Le Docteur Roux, was in Paris and we went for a whole month. And then we went to the Eiffel and we parted under Eiffel, and said, "I'm going to the fashion and literature and you go to the science this way," and then we met again. This, but it was beautiful. We took trip on the Sekwana.[6] This was the, all the colors, it was beautiful, it was really beautiful. We went before to Belgium to Antwerp. It was a sport, Olympiad, at that time.

Q: Before you got to Paris?

A: Before we got to Paris, yes. 1937.

Q: When you first started seeing each other, was he going to school at that time, to study in Germany?

A: Yes, he was the first year. And this is the picture of him, on his index book. And this was saved. Because this picture was here in the States by his aunt who sent, you know, he became a student and we sent the pictures, that he was already a student. This was, yeah.

01:33:04

Q: Now, were you going to school at this time, were you not?

A: I was -- no. I was still, you know, tutoring, and I been tutored with times, still. He helped me with a little bit with this, the algebra and that, you know, sometimes.

[6] Seine (Polish).

Q: When did you start working in the Bundist Library?

A: Oh, I was still young, you know, I was still young. I was maybe, I don't know, let's see, what year could it be? I was 18 -- something like that.

Q: And you worked there for a number of years?

A: Yes, a few years I was working there. Also working student in library.

Q: You were?

A: Oh, yes, I was going to the library.

Q: And where did, where did the two of you live once you got married?

A: Oh, with his parents. They had a six-room apartment, you know. They were teachers, and he and I was always hearing of that, working as a nurse, and they had six rooms and they gave us the best room. And I was working, there was a maid, I didn't have any obligations, not many.

Q: So they were fairly well off, I gather?

A: You know, they weren't rich but they were two teachers, you know, two teachers. She was once, not once, but she was up to the end, the President of the Teachers' Union. She was very active, also Bundist, also Bundist, you know. They didn't speak Yiddish at all. Michal didn't know Yiddish until was 21, he started to learn by himself to read. They spoke Polish all the time, and so was Genia. But he learned by himself. When he has 21, he said, "That's enough." It's interesting that the leaders, the Bundist leaders, the children never spoke Yiddish. Even the Erlich and Arthur (ph), you know who they are, they were the great leaders of the Bund, both of them were killed by the Russians during the war, in 1941. Arthur (ph) was an engineer, and Erlich, his two sons, were here. Victor (ph), he is a professor at Yale, and the children never spoke Yiddish. It was very interesting. Of course, they were sent to the best schools, to gimnazjums, this and that. So this is why Michal didn't speak Yiddish at all.

01:35:57

And he never even spoke Yiddish because he was afraid that he will, that he, that he will make mistakes and he didn't want to make any mistakes, so but he could read. In the end, he could read. In the end, he could read.

Q: Did you sometimes speak Yiddish between each other?

A: Michal and I? No, no, never. I likely spoke to -- started to speak Irene Polish, you know, not Yiddish, she didn't know a word of Yiddish. She started to learn Yiddish here in the States, yeah, not before. Because in Sweden, also, you know -- I'm Swedish and Polish. This is how we spoke to [inaudible].

Q: So what is happening in your life between 1937 and 1939? Are the two of you thinking about the war possibly coming there, or --

A: We wanted to come, 1939 was the World Fair in the States and we intended to come at that time. But, we were a little late because he had an aunt here, too. His mother's sister. One was in Paris and the other one was here. And we intended to come to the Worlds' Fair, it started in September, and he for some reasons couldn't make it, you know. I don't know if it was exams or registration or whatever it was, because he finished Politechnikum in 1939. Because he was also working, you know, with being married is, is to support a wife. So, he -- we intended to come but for some reason, we were late. If we would have come at that time, he wouldn't be dead, you know? He would stay here. But we were late.

Q: Were you intending to come to the United States just for the Worlds' Fair, just a vacation?

A: Just for, he would never leave, you know, he had to fight, fight for a better Poland, for the righteous, you know, those kinds of things. He would never leave Poland at that time, thinking, you know, what happened at that time. He would never leave Poland.

Q: So then the war starts, yeah?

A: Then the war starts, yes.

Q: What is that like? What's the beginning like for you and your family?

A: It was tragic. Meanwhile, you know, my sisters got married and were out of the house, Genia had a marvelous husband, Dubnikow, and they had a son, Majus, because he was born, in, in, in the month of May so they called him Majus, you see. It wasn't religious business.

01:39:01

Then Anka was married also, to Bachrach, a marvelous man, he just died 90, being 90 years old. He was writing to the end of his day, this was Bachrach. And they had a daughter, Genia. They went through Shanghai, came to the States. Guta was married to Bernard Rosenfeld; he was a lawyer, a Communist, and also marvelous man. So well educated, you know? We always had, as much as I know literature, we always had some kind of, you know, games. I always, you know, lost. He was always on top of everything. All kinds of literature and marvelous man. And my brother, who was also married and had a son, before the war. So, everybody was really out, you know. And I was married, so this is when the war broke out. Was only my young, youngest sister with my mother.

Q: So --

A: So – Krysia, she called her, little Krysia. But everybody took care of the household. And it so happens that on the seventh or eighth of September, it was an order by the mayor, their Warsaw

mayor, that all the men who were still at the age of military should get out of the city because the Germans were coming very close and they'll take all the men, so better you get out to the east, to Russia. The east side of Poland because maybe still the Poland will win the war with the Germans. And so did Michal and all the husbands. Only the oldest one, Genia and Dubnikow, they went together; they didn't leave. Anka stayed and Guta stayed and I stayed and all of them left. They went, Michal left with his two friends. Jerzy Lipszyc was home, he was students, they were students studying together in University. And Mietek Katowicz died, but I met Jerzy when I went with Irene to Poland, he came up.

01:42:03

They all left, they were all married, but they all left, left their wives. They went to the east side and after a few weeks, maybe a month, may have been six weeks, I don't know, they all came back. Mietek Katowicz's wife was pregnant. Michal came back, I think that Jerzy stayed a while. He was still in London -- he got, his father was a doctor and he was very well off, you know, some kind of contact he had but then he came back. So then, after a few weeks, they came back. Besides, Genia did not come back, Bachrach didn't come back, but he sent for my sister and the baby somehow. People were traveling back and forth, you know, through the borders between Russia and Germany, back and forth. So Anka left to Vilna, they were in Vilna. Genia was in Dobno, this was Ukrainian, and then Guta left with Buziek, so it was her husband, also to the Ukraine. And I stayed, I was there and Krysia had a boyfriend and she also left. So when Michal came back, I took my mother to our household and we stayed together. That was a very tragic situation at that time. I was sick. First of all, they bombarded Warsaw, I was so scared because Michal wasn't there and we went into the

cellars and I was so scared to death. I got fever, I didn't know what's happening and Michal wasn't there. It was very scary! Then suddenly he came back; they decided they cannot leave the wives and they came back. And since then, and then was, you know, and then after a while I got pregnant and --

Q: What happened?

A: And then also we had to move from our apartment to the ghetto. So, at that time I was already very sick and I was out of action. I was –

01:45:00

Q: What were you sick from?

A: Thyroid because my eyes at that time became permanent, permanent, you know, I never had this kind of, this was with the sickness. My heart, I was sick, I was, I was very sick. But this was already after Irene was born.

Q: But you moved to the ghetto in 1940?

A: No, this was already later, a little bit, '42, end of '40 or '41, something like -- because they did it in parts, you know. There was a small ghetto, a big ghetto. But at that time, we got tremendous room from somebody they knew, my mo-- mother-in-law and my father-in-law, from people who had a tremendous apartment, six rooms, something like that. And we got about two rooms, it was a one room later but divided into two rooms over there when she went to Jerska. This is where we all lived together.

Q: So now, who was together?

A: My mother-in-law, my father-in-law, my mother, Michal, I, the baby and Genia. For a while also came a sister, another sister, my mother-in-law's, Guta Schulman (ph). Her husband was also an editor in the Folks-tsaytung,[7] you know. Very nice man but he died before that. She was for a while in our apartment and she was together with my mother-in-law and my mother when the raid came and they were taken away. But this was later, already.

Q: Rose, when the war starts, and then they start having decrees about the Jews, yes, and then finally you have to go to the ghetto. What are people talking about? What kind of things?

A: It was a tremendous shock to everybody because the Germans came into the streets, they were killing just like that. They were tearing beards, you know, from the Jews. They were coming at night and taking out people from the houses. There were raids around the few blocks and taking people for work, to do this, to do that.

01:38:01

Before they started to take them to concentration camps. All kind of work. It was unbelievable what was going on in the streets. The fear. People didn't have anything to eat. Immediately the stores would close. The Germans took away everything they could. They came into the stores and into the homes and just like that. Didn't do anything and it was terrible. There were keys, you know, to stand in line, to get something. The, the Jewish, the Judenrat[8] -- it wasn't the Judenrat yet but, you know, the people who worked before in the Judenrat tried to keep everything together. But you know about the story about Czerniaków, who committed suicide, because they said you have to deliver so and so, many people, for this, this and that. He couldn't do it because he knew it was for

[7] People's paper (Yiddish).
[8] Jewish Council (German).

either camp or that, and he committed suicide. Others stayed, but then Jewish Police came. It was, it was a terrible thing. You can't even imagine what was going on. And we didn't have, I know that my mother-in-law was selling and selling and selling what we had. Anything goes! And people came from the Aryan side, they let them in, they paid to the, even Germans were sending them, the guards were watching. They came in, they were buying up things. It was a tremendous tragedy, tragedy, completely tragic. And then, started to sh -- to sh -- to see that people in the streets, the children begging, running around. Some didn't have already any strength to run around. I was a lot sick at that time. First of all, I gave birth, you know, and then I started, you know, with my thyroid. I was taken to the hospital.

Q: When did you give birth? It was April 17, 1941?

A: Yes.

Q: So it's a few months after the ghetto was sealed, that you're in the ghetto? And then you get sick?

A: I got sick, yeah.

Q: And what happened?

01:51:01

A: I got sick after that, after I gave birth, I got sick. I was afraid what's going to happen. The stress, thyroid, the stress, you know. What will, what will happen happen to Irene, what about this, and Michal will be taken away. You just, you live without tomorrow. You saw the next hour, you live. And this was, was a terrible, the hospital. There was no, when I was operated on, there was no antibiotics at all. They cut me all over because I was full of, you know, infection here, full. And it

was one millimeter from my main vein and the doctor, Arik Heller, as I spoke, is in Sweden now, he was at the operation. He was altogether, so that I am a miracle that I am alive. But this was, Irene was about at that time a few months old. It was a terrible, you didn't know what tomorrow will bring. The raids were tremendous. They, they surrounded, you know, blocks and blocks and you couldn't get out and everybody, the old people went, one side to the camps. The young ones went here. They were, you couldn't even figure out what's going to happen. What should I do? Nobody knew. We, we knew one thing, we were all going to perish.

Q: You knew that?

A: Was going on everyday. They come up, you know, Michal was constantly running to the underground, everyday. And keeping with them, what's going on and so on. The first thing he came back, I said, "What about England? What about America? Did you hear anything? They're not going to help?" That was all… We were all surprised. So this is, it was a tragic, it was a very tragic time. They were killing and killing and killing. And more and more dead, in the streets. Constantly. And raids and then the Judenrat started to try to get a little organized and the Jewish Militia came and they were, they were so corrupted.

01:54:00

Because they said, "If you bring a certain amount of Jews, your family will stay alive." You know, the oldest tricks. They believed in it, and they brought -- nothing helped. There were a few, you know, the Bund underground killed a few policeman for that. One policeman helped us, but he was once a Bundist and became a policeman, you know. They were also going, but this was later

already, towards the end. Umschlagplatz.[9] Michal holding Irene and I. If you want to hear it now, I'll tell you, how they raided, you know? But this was the period of --

Q: It's okay.

A: So, this is, and then when I was in the, in the hospital at that time, it wasn't a hospital, it was the, the Pen Club, a tremendous apartment there and they made it a hospital in the ghetto. As I told you, they didn't have any medications but they had to operate on me. And I was lying in the room for the nurses, which is as, as narrow as this is, you know, but they put a cot there for me so I wouldn't be with all these people and the doctors came to me there, you know, too. There came a day when they said that they are going to take away the hospitals and my doctors were the best of the surgeons in Warsaw because of the nurses and Gina, you know, knew them and she wanted them to operate on me. They were taken the night before from their houses, away, and never heard of them bef-- later on. And the next day, the whole hospital will be evacuated, with the sick, you know, to get away with them. So Gina and Michal came the day before and they put, we were on the third floor, they put their hands like that, they put their hands and brought me up to the house at that time.

Q: What, what month is that? Do you have any --

A: The 22nd of July.

Q: Oh my! The beginning of the deportation.

A: My birthday.

Q: That's your birthday?

A: The 22nd of July, this is the biggest evacuation for Treblinka. This is started the 22nd of July.

Q: So are you in the hospital May and June, after, after the birth of Irene?

A: Later.

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[9] Deportation area in the ghetto (German).

Q: For a couple of months, or later?

A: Later. Irene was born in April, yeah. This is, this is when it was, yeah. This is when it was.

Q: Okay, all right. Let's take a break now.

A: Okay.

Q: We'll start with your --

End of Tape 1

01:57:05

Tape 2

02:01:07

Q: Rose, before we start with after you came out of the hospital, July 20th or 21st 1942, I wanted to ask you some questions about that.

A: Okay.

Q: Was there an argument in your family about whether you should learn the Polish language and where you should learn it?

A: It wasn't a matter of learning my Polish languages, it came naturally from the moment I was born and raised, we spoke Polish, you know. It was the parents spoke Yiddish. But the main, really, conversations was among us, it was always in Polish. And when I went to school, I was suppose to go to school, there was a, there was a question. Should I go to a Folkshule,[10] which was in Yiddish, or should I go to a public school in Polish? And my sister, the oldest one, was a teacher herself. Said, absolutely to the Polish school, because I don't want her to go into the street and be afraid that somebody's going to beat her up when she speaks Yiddish. And this was the general atmosphere, you know. But some people, the Folkshule was very popular among the workers, you know, the Bundists particular. There was also the Poale Zion schools in Yiddish. Nellie's (ph) mother was the teacher in the Poale Zion, but in my family they said, "Absolutely," my sister said, the oldest one, "Absolutely not." And my mother and father, you know, went along with my sister, you know. She was a teacher, she knew what's going on in the, in the schools and so on, and I went to a public school in Polish. Because this was if you speak Yiddish, you know, you are always in risk. And they didn't want me to have this as a main language.

[10] Elementary school (Yiddish).

Q: When, when you were working in the library, you were given an assignment to create a list of 100 books. Could you tell us that story?

A: Yes. As I told you before, I was cataloging, and, you know, putting in categories different books. And the workers came and, and always ask, "Could you give me a good book, something to read?" And when I spoke to the director of the library, he said to me, "Rozka, why won't you write out a list of 100 books so when the people come in and want to take a book out, they could see the list, what they should take."

02:04:09

And I decided to do that. So, I put down a list of 103 books I know exactly, from different categories, categories and countries. And there was the Scandinavian countries and American literature and, of course, Polish literature, French, all kind. Everything in translation, of course, into Polish, not in the original languages. So I put down a list of 103 books, and Russian literature was a very, very modern at the time, to read the Russian, the Russian literature translated into Polish. And I went to Mrs. Dobnow. Erlich. Dobnow was the daughter of the famous historian Dubnow, wrote the history of the Jews. And she was herself a poet. She was writing poetry in still Russian and knew excellent Polish literature -- altogether a very intelligent and very well educated. His two sons were professors, one of Columbia and the one is who passed away and the one is in Yale. And she was there, I made an appointment with her, and I said, "Mrs. Dubnow, I want to come and have your opinion," because I didn't want to rely on myself, that this is right. So I left with her the list of 100 books and she studied it. Then she, I called her, and she said, "Would you come up? Let's have a discussion about it." And there she accepted the 100 books, but one which was called, *Cztowiek Zmienia S'ku're.*[11] In English, it

[11] Bruno Jasienski's book's English title is *A Man Changes His Ski*n.

would be “a person changes his skin.” It means that becoming – changing his ideas, his ideology. This is what it means, that a person changes his skin. She didn’t want to put it in. She didn’t want – she was a little bit, you know… She was a Bundist, but she didn’t want to start with the Communists. This was my feeling at that time, as young as I was. And I felt it should be there. And we had a big discussion about it. And she told me, "If you feel so strongly about it, let’s leave it.” It was written by Bruno Jasienski, who was a Communist once and he -- who believed in Christ that have to help people and so on. The funniest this was when I came to the United States, and I came to visit her, so she says to me, “If you feel so strongly about it, let's leave it.” The funniest thing was when I came to the United States and I came to visit her. So she says to me, “Rozka, I remember how you argued with me about that book, that we had the discussion about that book.” I was beside myself. How could she remember such a stupid thing and the khutspe[12] of me, you know, to argue with her when she says let's take it out. I had three other books in case, but this was -- I was glad that she remembered.

Q: So you did leave it in?

A: True, yeah. She says, “If you feel so strongly about it.” She let me in [indecipherable]. Nothing would happen, but she wanted to make her point and -- and I -- I stood up, you know, by that.

Q: I wanted to ask you a couple of questions about Michal, this is before the war, and your relationships. You -- you used to help him with his homework?

A: You see, they have projects for their exams, to make a project -- he was an engineer. And they made -- a mechanical engineer, you know. They used to make all kind of machines and what is it called, what they have at when they build, you know the -- the buildings and they have the big…

Q: A crane?

A: The cranes, yeah. The cranes, you know. All kind of things which is connected with force, with you know, pressure, so on, so on. And he used to make on big paper, he used to make all

[12] Gall or nerve (Yiddish).

this kind of drawings. But he made it in pencil and this had to be done in -- in -- in ink. So when he did it -- I was very scrupulous, you know, very always detailed. So he said, “Why don't you do it in ink, because I have to do, I have to study for my exam,” or something like that. And I did it. So I was working very diligently and very accurately and he was very happy about it, he had help. Other students, who had to work, you know, make a living, they had to give it to somebody, you know. And it-interesting, they were called, you know how? Negroes, “murzyn” in Polish. Because murzyn, murzynowác, it means, you know, to do it in black. This is what they called it. And they had to pay for that, a lot of money. But I was -- I wasn't paid. But I helped him a lot you know, in that.

Q: Rose, I asked you when you -- when you were growing up, whether you had Polish friends, or whether you were involved in any way and you said no. But, was there a change in your life in that respect when you met Michal?

A: Oh, yes, because Michal was already -- you know, he went at that time to the university and he belonged you know, to the -- to the Bund and they had a very close relationship with the PPS, this is Polska Partia Socjalistyczna.[13] This is like the Bund in Jew- in, you know, the Jewish. And this is the Polska, this Polish party, Socjalistyczna. And over there, there was also a sport club called Skra,[14] where you know, the Jutrznia and Skra used to meet. And Gina, Michal's sister, had a lot of friends because she was also an athlete, Gina, in this sport club in Jutrznia and they met -- they had all kind of, you know, sport games together. And she had very close friends in the Polish club. And among them was one Marysia Sawicka, who was a tremendous help to us later on in the -- on the Aryan side in the, you know, when we went out. And Michal also had a lot of friends there and he had a contact later on, when he was going out from the ghetto, you know, for ammunition and so on, was the Polish friend from the pepperess. So it wasn't exact -- at my age at that time, and my contacts wasn't the same as theirs were. And then we were all, you know, we had the very good contact with them and they helped us tremendously.

[13] Polish Socialist Party (Polish).
[14] Spark (Polish).

Q: W-Were you surprised at his --

A: No.

Q: No?

A: Not at all, no. Because we always felt that you know, we have to be brothers, whoever you are. Even was a song about it, black and white, you know, all kind of colors, we should be brothers. No, absolutely not. This was our idea, you know, [indecipherable] so.

Q: So in -- not only because it helped you, but you thought it was important that you were be -- able to have this kind this relationship?

A: Of course, yeah. Of course. And frankly, you know, also when I went to the Aryan side, I cont-I contacted a woman whom I knew, a Polish woman and asked her, you know, where to go, where to be and she helped us also. And there was a place -- friend of Wnorowska, she was a seamstress and we used to work there and we used to meet there and even Vladka you know, was coming there also. A lot of people. This was my -- this was my, you know, contribution, this address. Samarch (ph) was a marvelous person. No, on the contrary. But at -- as a child, you know, as a youngster, I didn't have the contact with them. But it wasn't that -- that I would separate.

Q: It was just -- it just was coincidental then?

A: Coincident, that's right, yeah, absolutely.

Q: Okay. When, when we ended the last tape, we ended where you were taken out of the hospital by Gina and Michal be-because there was going to be an Aktion[15] and it was the huge deportat -- the beginning of the huge deportations.

A: Yes.

Q: Were you still very sick when they took you?

A: No, I was better already. No, I could walk, you know, I could walk. It was still, you know, I was very weak, but I could walk and I -- not that I could be on my own, but I could walk and I

[15] A military operation taken for military, eugenic, or racial ends (German).

could do certain things. But the raids were constantly terrible. And one of the raids, you know, we all would have to come down. Michal got some kind of an Answeiss.[16] Know what's an Answeiss? It is some kind of a permit from a certain place. This is through the Judenrat, we had somebody there, you know and he got it that he's working here and there, which wasn't true. He wasn't working there, but that he's working, he is needed as engineer and so on. So -- so we all had to go down and my in-laws and there was her sister also, Guta Schulman (ph), which I said and my mother, myself and Irene, holding her, and Michal. We all were standing in the court there, but they said, who has Answeiss could take out his wife, or a child, you know, whatever it is. And Michal approached one of these and they let me out with Irene and the rest went -- went to the Umschlagplatz and this was my -- my mother was standing with me and I knew this is the end. I knew this is the end. It was. And we went back upstairs with Irene. Gina wasn't there. Gina was very often, you know, in the Umschlagplatz going with her uniform as a nurse, smuggling out people, you know, whom she knew. She wasn't there. And then when she f-found out that our area was, you know, raided, she came running and she found us. She was beside herself, you know, her parents were gone and my mother was gone.

Q: Rose, did you know then where they were going?

A: We knew already.

Q: You did?

A: Because there was, yeah. There was a friend of ours, Frydrych, Zygmunt Frydrych. He went with the train, you know, he got attached to the train somehow and he went up to Treblinka. And he saw what's happening and he came back with this, you know, news that everybody's being gassed over there. He knew all right. So we knew already. The 22nd of July, we knew already what it is. There were times when they were promising, you know, before, that we'll give you a few pounds of bread and then t -- something, sugar, or whatever it is and to come, you know, to

[16] Permit (German).

another place and so the people went for it, they were hungry and they went for that. But we knew already.

Q: Had -- had you all heard about the Idzodz (ph) group when, in 1941, when they -- when they started the war against Russia? That they were -- there were mass shootings, did you hear about that?

A: Of course, we knew already, we knew about it, yeah. We knew about it.

Q: So you knew this was all a death sentence in some way?

A: Oh, we knew, yeah, we knew. And then was the other time, after that -- I was only with -- with Michal, you know, Gina and -- and the baby. That's it. Another raid of the building and they were running -- the Jewish policeman, they were running up the -- to look into the apartments, whether somebody was hidden or not. And they would take down, because if still bring people, you know, his family, it will be saved. This is how they brought the people. And we heard it will be decided not to go down, Michal, and to keep Irene quiet, you know. We went in the very far corner of the apartment, they cannot see us and we left the doors open, so they'll see that nobody's -- think that nobody's there. And we heard them running up -- there was another floor, running up and down and opening the doors and heaved around, looked in and I was keeping Irene on a table, dressed. We were all dressed to go. I was keeping her on the table and pushing into her mouth, candies, so she cannot ta -- she cannot scream, she cannot talk, she cannot do anything. And I was pushing, you know, and pushing in -- into-- into that -- in that, her mouth. And she didn't -- not a sound. And they just glanced in and -- and went.

Q: They didn't see anything?

A: No, they didn't see us, of course not. And the -- Genia, heard again that. She came in and you know, she was frantic. She started to cry, it's [inaudible].

Q: It must have been terrifying.

A: There is no expression for that. And then -- they know, when we decided -- I'll tell you, this came a point when I couldn't make any more decisions. I didn't have the strength. Michal was doing all the decisions, you know, all the time. I couldn't do that. And it was a raid. This was the

last time. And there were columns going the street and we had to go, it was -- it was the column, you know. We couldn't already get out. And there was a wide street there, Zamenhoff Street, going to the Umschlagplatz. And there was one Jewish militia man, who was once in the Bund, I knew him too, Michal knew him, I knew him. And we were in the back, and he came over to us, he was watching that nobody should escape. He came over to us and said, “Michal, go to the front, to the very front and I'll watch.” And somehow, you know, he got to the very -- Michal was carrying Irene and I was walking, you know -- hardly walking, but walking. And we came to -- and Michal told me, “You see on that corner, that Kupieka Street, there is a tremendous,” oh, what's called? Kiosk, a wi -- a ra -- a round one, but very wide. He said, “When we come to that kiosk,” I was the first one at the sidewalk, “you go to the right.” I said, “I'm afr” -- in the back, the Germans were standing and shooting whoever would move, you know, they shoot. I said, “Michal, I cannot do that.” He said, “You're going to do that.” And he gave me, when we came to the corner, he gave me such a push and I went to the front of that kiosk, because it was hidden a little bit, you know, for the column and then Michal came with the baby. And we're standing, until everybody pass by. It's hard to describe. When they pass by, we cross the street and there was an empty building already. Everything was open. And we hid there for awhile. Then we passed, you know, we came home, back. But this was already about two blocks from the Umschlagplatz, we go. But if he wouldn't the -- but he made all the decisions at that time, I couldn't any more. And then he decided that we going out, after that. And that we're going to our ex-mate, who was living in Prague. This is the vistalna, divided you know, Prague like Bronx, let's say, in Manhattan. And she live in there and she was like, you know, in French they have the concierge. So she was taking care of the buildings, cleaning and everything. And she knew everybody who comes in and who goes. She had no husband, she has a daughter. But we decided to go there. And how we went there, we went with the so-called platzufka (ph). Platzufka was they were collecting people for work in different directions, coming out of the ghetto, going to that place and then coming back. So we took the baby, and you could take the baby that time, to

different places to work. And we went out and on the other side, on the Aryan side, we stepped again, away from the column in a certain moment.

Q: And did he pick the moment?

A: Always. I never did anything. I was a very passive at that time. I had the baby, I was thinking about the baby, I wasn't too well and -- and so on. He always picked this. He always made all the decis -- since that moment, he made always the -- the -- all -- all the decisions. And -- and we got -- we got into a streetcar and went there. When she looked at us, she paled -- she was pale. She was afraid, you know, went there. And we told her that it's only for a few days until we find something. Didn't have any papers, nothing. We took off all the armbands and this is how we did. In the column, as we were marching, we took off the -- the -- the bands, you know and -- and this is how we got there. So she said that she'll find, you know -- he was running around with different, you know, paper, no paper and said, “I'll get a birth certificate of her sister,” who is in Germany, working for the Germans, she was taken by the Germans. So as there is no reason, you know, she wasn't afraid, she went over there. It was in a -- it was a country there, you know, a village called Gleboczyce and she got me the paper there and she said that I can go there, to this, you know, village and I can stay with so and so. The name of that peasant was Patoka, a tall, old man, gray. She was very vivacious with her son and I went there with Irene, I stayed. Michal took me there and he left for Warsaw, he couldn't stay there, Michal couldn't stay there, he shouldn't have, because the less people the better. And I was staying there for awhile, this is how we got out on the Aryan side. I was staying there for -- for awhile.

Q: How did you get there, did you walk?

A: No, by train.

Q: By train?

A: Yeah, was all a risk. This is all a risk, you know. Every --

Q: Did Michal -- did Michal have papers now too, or not?

A: Not yet.

Q: Not yet.

A: Not yet, yeah. He had the Answeiss, you know, that he is working. This was so he looked as an Aryan, so there was no problems and -- no problem, was always a problem. Then one time, you know, one of the workers from his factory met him in the street, they said, “Mr. engineer, what are you doing here?” You know, he knew that he is Jewish. And he gave him shelter later on, he was selate (ph). This is another story. But this is how we got into the country, you know, with Irene, for a few days, you know. We'd worked there for a few weeks. And…

Q: How were you at that time, during those few weeks? Were -- did Michal come back and forth?

A: Yes, yes, he came back for -- back and forth, yeah.

Q: Every few days, or?

A: No, for a week, something like that, he had for a week, but never, you know, he could, he said -- he had things to do also, you know in -- in Warsaw. Preparing whatever -- he was very active with the -- with the fighting organization, you know. He was very fight -- he was very active there.

Q: Did you know what he was doing at that time?

A: Not exactly, not exactly. I knew that he is involved, but not exactly, he didn't tell me, you know. So over there, how -- it was interesting. They loved Irene, the little baby and whenever -- he sometimes took her on his knee -- the -- the peasant, Mr. Patoka took -- took her on her knee and they were eating like, potato balls, you know, made. Take matzo balls, you know potato balls. So he took a piece into his mouth, he made it soft and gave it to her. I was looking at it and I was dying, you know. But, didn't say a word about it. There was a little wooden thing for them to give food to the -- to the pigs, they brought it in. So I washed it, I put in water and I bathed Irene. I took her to the fields and I -- I could pick the, what's called? Peas, the green peas in this, I took it out and I gave it. I took carrots, I-I grated them, I squeezed out juice to have for her, the juice the -- the -- the you know, the carrot juice, some vitamins. And when the -- the woman, the peasant, she saw this, she says, “We give it to the pigs, why do you give it to the baby?” You

know, this kind of things, very primitive, but kind. And I think that the soltys, you know what's the soltis, the eldest of the village, who was getting on everything, I think that he guessed who I am, but he never said anything. But one day, he came and he said, “The Germans are coming for the boys and girls. It would be good for you to escape here from here with the child. I think I wrote about it, you read it. Michal isn't here, I have no address for Michal. He was one right here, one right there, didn't know what to do. I had a few, you know, Polish zlotys, but didn't know what to do and I had to go, because if he came to me and said it in a nice way, that he didn't want me, you know, to -- he knew that I wouldn't survive with the child. He said I have to disappear, I have to disappear. And he said, that peasant said there is a brother of the -- his wife in -- near Tuszcz. Tuszcz is -- was the station where the train stopped for Treblinka, you know. Tuszcz, Malkinia and Treblinka, this was the -- the route. “He's a smith (ph), you know and so we can take you there. And maybe until your husband will come, he'll find you.” Well, it was quite a few miles. I was carrying Irene you know, with the rest of my, of my strengths. He was carrying a little package what I had, you know, diapers, this. And we came there. Well, they were very nice to us because, you know, he says my husband should come, you know and they'll take me away, it's only a matter of a few days. So she was very nice. But somebody pass by from the village where I was before, in the Gleb- Gleboczyce, who said, “She was there, why is she here? She is probably Jewish.” This was it. So she came in, the wife and said, “You cannot stay here any more. You have to go.” And then I decided to go to Warsaw. What do I do? I don't know where, no address, no nothing. And Michal wouldn't know where I am. So I said, “Okay, tomorrow I'll go. You'll take me there to the station and I'll go.” So then I put Irene to sleep for a nap before the trip. Trip supposed to be one o'clock, two o'clock, I don't remember. And she slept and I was standing at the window and I was crying. And suddenly I see somebody passing by. Michal. And I started to run after him, until I came out. He was very fast walking, he didn't know anything, you know. And -- and he didn't hear me, and he didn't hear me screaming, “Michal.” So I took a stone, I threw at him. So then he turned around, said, “What you doing here?” And I told him the whole story. This was a miracle, complete miracle. So he came into the apartment

and then the -- when the smith (ph), you know, he said, you know, was talking to him and just looking him up and down and he said, “What do you do?” And he says, “Oh, I am a mechanic, you know, this, that.” So he looks at his hand and said, “You are not a mechanic. Doesn't look like it.” And we left. I with Michal, we left. And he took me to pref -- you know, we're afraid of the train, you know. People were -- this was a station where everybody was running here and there. So he took me there, he took me to Warsaw, we took a -- a carriage, you know, a -- s-same is standing in Central Park. And we got off about two blocks before it's destination, which was a very old -- she was a concierge, that woman and the -- for that building where he took me. And this was a very narrow, little room where there were already three woman living. The -- the owner -- the -- the -- the concierge with a little boy and I come and with Irene and Michal. He found it, somebody told him, but he lived not far away, one block away. He lived there, lived, you know, slept. This was the -- the -- the worker where he -- whom he met in the street, what are you doing, and he gave him -- said threw he can stay with him. He was very nice too, that man. He was helping for awhile and then he changed his mind and started to talk. So we -- we went there and I had the little narrow bed for Irene and myself and we contacted the -- Gina, she was working in Warsaw. And Gina came, you know and what do we do? We cannot stay here, everybody will know. And we decided to separate Irene from us, for her to be safe. Cause we knew that we'll perish, this way, another way. It's impossible to live through the whole thing, impossible. So let Irene stay, you know, at least. And we talked it over with Gina, and Gina said, “I have somebody.” And she said, where she gave her exam for nursing -- which was international -- the Ministry, she had to go through the Ministry of -- of Health and Education, Dr. Zachert. “She seemed to me a very nice person,” she said, “when she -- when she examined me. I'll call her.” She called her, she had already papers and she called her and she said that her -- she want to see her, because she want to -- advice from her. She said, “Of course, come.” A very nice person. And she went up and when she told her over the phone that she's on the Juzwiak. So she said, “You are not Juzwiak. You are a Gina Klepfisz. Please come in.” And she told her the story, she has a brother and a sister-in-law and a baby and sad situation, what can we do? She

was also the director of the orphanage, Boduena. Priest Boduen was called. She says, “I can take the baby to the orphanage as an orphan, but not knowing that she's an orphan and she has to be left in the street and I'll take her over.” And here starts the whole thing.

End of Tape 1, Side A

Beginning of Tape 1, Side B

Q: And here starts the whole thing… So, it was a very difficult decision, but we had to do it… Let's stop.

A: All right, let's -- let's stop for a moment. Okay?

Q: So, we talked with Michal, over and how it was going to -- we have to put a name on her and the Dr. Zachert will wait in the square, so and so and somebody has to come with Irene. Just leave her and go away and she'll pick her up. So I said to Michal, “I'm not going to do that, I can't. You have to do it.” And Gina was also there, in the square, someplace without Dr. Zachert. So he said, “Okay,” he has to do it. Well, I said good-bye to Irene, he took her and left. I was beside myself… So Michal went there, to the square. He saw from the far Dr. Zachert and he saw Gina, too. And he went to Gina, he said, “I'm not going to do that, you do it.” And Gina did it. She went close to Dr. Zachert and sat down on the bench and said to Irka, “Wait here a second, I just go for something,” you know, for what-whatever. “But sit here.” And she was playing with something. So she -- and she left. The moment she left, Dr. Zachert came and took the baby. This is how she got to Boduena. So at least I knew that she was going to be safe, over there. No raids, you know.

Q: How old was she, Rose, then?

A: A year and a half. But she talked already, you know and she was very bright and very bright, musical, very bright. And she could sing, you know, with what we're singing, you know, the melodies. And the words, sometimes. Then Gina asked Dr. Sachat what's going to happen to me? So she says, “I have a sister with thr -- with three children.” They are also belong to the, you know, the people's party, Partja Ludowa, which were more, you know, li -- Catholics, deep Catholics, you know. But -- believed in Christ, that have to help people and so on. And she said,

“Maybe she'll come there, you know, and be the housekeeper, the maid.” And she -- she said that we have to -- I -- “She'll have to be reviewed, to have a few reviews with them,” you know, my Polish, my behavior, my -- of course, a big asticulation (ph) all with Jews have all together. “And this would be a good place for her. And they have to look at her, how she looks.” My eyes were already prominent at that time. You'll see another picture of me before that, was because of thyroid. Again, I immediately knew what it is, you know, when I got up in the morning and my eyes were prominent. Never had this kind of eyes. So I went there, was there three times, interview. Meanwhile, before that I was in that room, where I lived, you know, where I be -- came from, with all these women. They were prostitute and they had all her -- their business in the streets. They came in the middle of the night, or whatever. I didn't know about it. I wouldn't even think about it, Michal didn't know about it. And one evening was very -- what -- was very rainy, you know and they couldn't do their business in the street, so they invited two -- two men, you know. And there was like a curtain over their bed and I was sitting there and reading, what do I do? I was reading something. Someone said, “Why can't she give?” “Leave her alone, she has a husband.” “So, what's this?” But [indecipherable] have to go. So I told them that next time, that when they have some guests in their house, to let me know and I will go out. And they did it one day, it was very cold or something like that. And they said to me, “Take only five, 10 minutes, can come back, but don't go around.” They were very good people, very good women, really. They loved Irene. She didn't cry at night, you know, all the time. So they told me to go and I went out and I was walking around the block, it was evening, around the blocks, I wasn't afraid that somebody can catch me. And I was walking probably for a half an hour or more, even. And then I hear somebody grabs me. It was one of the -- said, “What do you think, going in such a cold time, all around? Why don't you come back? I told you take only five, 10 minutes, that's all. You -- you can get, you know, a pneumonia or something like that, come in.” This were the women. Then when -- also when I gave away the baby, you know, when I said it's going to my cousin, Hearanther (ph) says, “Why did you do that? We could take care of her if you wouldn't, you know.” And we said, “I'm going to work, he is going to work,” you know, if a

Jew wouldn't be able to take it, “We would take care of them.” They were good women. And they loved Irene, you know, because she didn't cry, they were afraid in the beginning that, who knows, the baby will cry, but -- so this was the story before I went for the interviews.

Q: How long did you stay in that room with those women, do -- do you have any recollection?

A: About two weeks, probably. Probably two weeks, cause we arranged with Irene quite fast. Were afraid for every day, somebody would say, “That Jews,” so they would take away it. So Gina arranged it, you know and Dr. Sachat. And I was waiting for about two weeks, I would say.

Q: And -- and while you were waiting to hear the news about whether you could go to this -- to the sister, did you keep hearing that Irene was -- did you get news about Irene in the orphanage, or not?

A: Not at that time.

Q: Okay.

A: Not at that time, no. No, not at that -- that time. But I knew that she will take care of her, I knew that.

Q: You trusted them?

A: I trust, absolutely yeah. I trust that she's safe there. This is why I did it. If I would have any doubts, I wouldn't do it. Because if doubts, I can have outside too, I don't have to give her away. But I was sure that she -- bombing, bombardment. The Germans are coming. So I went there for the interviews and of course I passed it. And I was like a mother to the children, instead of my own. I tutored them. She told me -- and their sister, Dr. Sachat told me. He was an also engineer, architect, the whole building was of architects, a co-op of architects. Intelligent, you know, nice people. And you know, they said that the house was never in such an order, never in their life. The oldest son was 14 years old, Mirek. Gorgeous, he was like really gorgeous, beautiful. He helped me a lot. He didn't know, the children didn't know who I am, that I'm Jewish. Only the -- the parents and of course the sarachtinta (ph). They come very often, they used to come, you know, for holidays they get together and this and that. And she said -- her name was Rouba…

Q: This is the wife?

A: The wife, yeah, yeah, Halina. Yes, and he was Yusef (ph). And Mirek, Ewa and Julek, the three children. They loved me, because I was constantly spending time with them, tutoring, because the schools, was no, you know, there was -- Mirek was going to school, but it was underground. They shouldn't have schools, children couldn't go to school. And to wash them and sew was sew, I was sewing for them, you know, every -- when they were sick, only they wanted me. And she, whenever I call, was going marketing. She said, “Mireczku, you always have to go with Miss, it was Miss Pani[17] Lodziu, you know, I was Lodziu Lowakatya (ph).

Q: What was your -- what was your new name?

A: Lodziu Lowakatya (ph) Sheletska (ph), this is what I got in the country, that my -- I have the -- the Kennkarte.[18] And always go marketing with, because it's difficult for her, you know, she's tiny. And he said, “Yes, of course.” Whenever he used to leave the apartment, he used to bring me coal from the cellar and all kinds of the heaviest things he used to bring me. When he used to leave the house, he used come, “Pani Lodziu, may I go?” You know, this way. He was very nice. And the children, the two younger children, she was going once a week to another town, where she had an uncle, a priest, Lowicz, to Lowicz, and bring food. Sour cream, butter, cheeses, you know, all kind of things. A lot of it, he'd start to prepare for her when she's coming and she could sell to the neighbors, because we couldn't get it. And she didn't take much money. Before that, she had herself, what she made from them, she could pay for her own, to have for the family. So she was free to go for a few days, for two days, three days, because I took care of the family, you know. So it was a double thing. And not to make me feel bad, she was paying me 80 zlotys a month that I’m working for it, not that I’m giving, you know, her this. Through her I had a telephone there, Michal could call me. And I had a lot of contacts. Over there was living one woman and also she was a teacher and she was very -- and she probably guessed, we never talked about it, but I’m sure she guessed who I am. What I am, you know, who I am. I found

[17] Mrs. (Polish).
[18] ID card (German).

another one, also a friend of hers and that woman, where I could put my friend, Halinka Ellenbogen. She was also a maid someplace. She was always with swollen knees because she was on the floor, you know, washing the floors. I never did this kind of thing. And she was crying and this and that, but she looked very well, you know, like really Aryan. She used to come up to me and I gave her a place to live not far from me. She was also a teacher. And she had, and then I gave her the place with Dr. Zachert in Boduen, so she saw Irene every day. And so she had the apartment I arranged for her, she had the books and French literature, all kinds of things. She was so proud of it -- after being a maid, you know, when we came to Florida. And the work she had in Boduen, she could see Irene every day. And I got reports from her about Irene. But one day, in the beginning, I wanted to see Irene. So I started to walk there. It wasn't too far from me, it was far enough but not too bad. I could walk then have to take the train which I was avoiding. And the children were going from one side of the street to the other to play with the garden. And I knew from afar, I could see Irene. And one day I decided to go to her, to pick up her hand and I said, I'll help you to cross the street. And she gave her hand and she looked at me and she walked with me and the nun came and she started screaming at me, "You know that you are not allowed to touch our children! You can give them some kind of infection!" which is true. It was typhus and syphilis and this kind, so I said, I'm sorry. I never do it again. So I left Irene and I walked away and she said," Mommy!" I got scared. I was afraid that the nun heard it but she didn't. I never went again. She recognized me. It was after a few months. She was crying the first three months, I heard.

02:56:00

Dr. Zachert told me that. At night, she was crying. And then, I have a very sharp instinct, I don't know how it happens but it is so. I can somehow feel out things. I was cooking something, I was preparing dinner, and I had a dish with peeled potatoes to put into the water, put into the pot.

And I was thinking about Irka and I said, “Irka is very sick.” And everything fell down on the floor. I didn’t understand why. So then, I called, I didn’t call, I called Dr. Zachert and I said, “I have a feeling that Irka is very sick.” She said, “Yes, it’s true. She still has a mark on her leg, she got some kind of infection.” And even the priest wanted to come, you know, she was very sick. And then, you know, somehow she got out of it, you know.

Q: We have to change the tapes, so let’s take a break, okay?

A: Yes, please.

02:59:00

End of Tape 2

Tape 3

03:01:04

Q: Rose, I want to go back a little because we forgot a very sweet story about Irene and milk and a cow. Can you tell us that story?

A: Yes. You know, the ghetto when it was established and they come down a little bit, they settled down, and there were places where they had cows. They took them to the field during the day, close by, and then, you know, some never went out of the ghetto, too. And that I couldn't, I was breastfeeding her, but not always I had enough and so once she needed milk. And my doctors, they believed very much in fresh milk so my mother-in-law found out where the cows are. They wasn't too far from where we lived. And we decided to buy milk, fresh milk, as she, you know, was selling a lot of things to have money for everyday, and so on. We took, we went the first time, I went and bought milk and she asked me, "Which cow do you want?" To me they looked all the same, but I said, "This cow." So she gave me milk from this cow and from then on, I was always buying from the same cow the milk because I was afraid maybe another cow could get sick or something will happen to her and then it will be a reflection on Irene. So we had the milk all the time, whenever I bought, from the same cow.

Q: Was Irene hungry?

A: Irene was never hungry. Maybe was in the orphanage, I don't think the children were hungry in the orphanage because they got some food, whether it was good food or bad food, I don't know. But I am sure that she was never hungry. She needed a lot, let's see, other things like a fruit, a chocolate, which I always sent in, and Dr. Zachert used to give her. Even my husband,

Michal, he went a few times to the orphanage and brought the chocolate and good things to Dr. Zachert so she can give it to her. And she was giving to her, I gave it to her and she was giving very quietly to Irene, I know, something special. But when he went there, she was screaming at him, she said to never show up again. Because it was very dangerous for the child.

03:03:59

Nobody should know, only the director of the orphanage knew, the woman, that she is a Jewish child, and I can -- only the mother -- can pick her up. This was her restriction, Dr. Zachert's, when Irene came to the orphanage. She said only I can pick her up and not to give the child to anybody because people adopt, you know how it is, she looked as a very Aryan child. She was blonde. You'll see the photographs of her when she's a little, a little child. So this is, you know, but I don't think Irene was hungry.

Q: So even in the ghetto she wasn't hungry?

A: I don't think so, no. And that… Look, she was the only child in our family, you know. We could be hungry, I was not ever, not all the time, you know, I had enough, believe me. But Irene, no, Irene had even fresh milk from the same cow. No, she wasn't hungry. And later on, she got -- I would have a very difficult time, but Irene usually had everything when it comes to food. Even, even her clothes, later on, I was sewing and Halinka was sewing for her, so we had, she was, I don't think Irene suffered.

Q: When you described the deportation of your mother, and your mother-in-law and father-in-law, there's a piece of the story that I think that, that you didn't tell us about Gina seeing them at the gate?

A: Yeah, Gina wasn't there when the raid was in the building, but she was in the hospital. But she saw them later on in the Umschlagplatz, and Maria was carrying her father's -- I mean, Irene's great-grandfather, a golden watch which the men always carried in their vests, with the chains, the golden chains. And she took this watch and she gave it to Genia and said, "This watch, this golden watch, is for Irene. Whenever she would be in need to have it, to buy her out of whatever happens, but this is for this child." And she gave it to Irene and then, she gave it to Gina and Gina gave it to me. And later on, I gave it to Dr. Zachert for her when she was in the orphanage. With the address of the Aunt here in the States, inside the watch I put in a little card with the address of Irene's grandmother's sister, here in the States. But she was killed by the Ukrainians in the Polish uprising.

Q: Dr. Zachert?

03:07:16

A: With her husband, yeah.

Q: Yeah, hold on for a second. Rose, can you, can you tell us how Dr. Zachert and her husband were killed?

A: In the Polish uprising, it was 1944. The Ukrainians were there, the Latvians were there, the Lithuanians on the side of Germany and they were behaving terrible. They were drinking and killing and this was the case with Dr. Zachert because somebody told us what happened at that time. They took all the people down, they lived in a very fine neighborhood, this is where I was, not far from them. And they took them down on onto the court and just killed them and robbed them. And at that time, also, you know, when the watch was then with them. But this was what

they were doing. Before I want to still tell you about going back, my life, this Rouba, that Halina Ellenbogen used to come up to me, did I tell you that?

Q: Was she the one who was living in the, yes, you told me.

A: Yes, I told you about that. That she was, you know, I gave her the job and then, at that time, also during that time, we used to go, you know, meeting, then I met Maria and Blanca, Maria Rosenbloom (ph) and Blanca Rosenberg.

Q: And how did you meet them?

A: It was by pure accident. Halina Ellenbogen was before Madden Sanitarium (ph) a sanitarium for children, for sick children under the auspices of Bund. Madden (ph) was one of the great leaders from the Bund – really a theoretician of the Bund -- so there was a sanitarium named in his name and during the war. She was there. Perelka is really her name, Ellenbogen. There was also Boleck Ellenbogen and Anya (ph) Ellenbogen, so it was the family. And after the liquidation of the Madden Sanitarium, in fact, Michal came there and told them one night that they can go out but they didn't hear; they were on another side of the -- and this was from Warsaw quite a few miles, about 10 or 15 miles.

03:10:05

They had to go by train, and they didn't hear him, but he went at night. Halina said that she heard him, but they couldn't come to that point because they were afraid. So they then came to Warsaw, there was one woman also, a teacher, in Madden Sanitarium, which was -- Irene was also young and she took care of her and she came to look for work. And at that time Blanca and Maria were working at the Germans; she probably told you. And she came to ask for work.

There were Volksdeutscher[19] Germans, or German, "real Germans." And so she, Blanca, was the head maid over the housekeeper, for the Germans, and she looked at her, and she said, "My name is Geneska (ph)," which is a Polish name. So Blanca answered her, "We have a lot of Geneska's (ph) like that, you know." And through her, Halina came to Blanca and Maria and, as we were meeting constantly, you know, Sundays we had all off. So we're meeting in one place, either at Anya (ph) Ellenbogen's, where she was working, her mistress was going out, so we brought in Blanca and Maria also there. And sometimes we were going there because they could listen to the radio, to the, you know, Germans could have radio, so we could listen to what's going on. So this is how I got, you know -- we were, I want to tell you, during that time we were meeting, all these friends, and we're meeting Marysia Sevitzka, you know, and just Navel (ph) Halska (ph), who gave us a lot of help, particularly to Michal and Gina and when Gina was sick, they were taking care of her. But this was during the Aryan side, until the Polish uprising in 1944. And during, you know, the Polish uprising --

Q: Could we, could we go back, because in some ways we are moving faster. There's a period between October-November, when Irene goes into the orphanage and you're working at that house. Between that time and then the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto, the Jewish, Jewish uprising, and how much you're seeing, Michal and --

A: And the Jewish were uprising, the Warsaw ghetto uprising, you talking? How much I was seeing?

Q: Seeing him, what did you know about what he was doing at that point?

03:12:53

[19] Ethnic German (German).

A: Okay, yes. At that point, I knew already what he was doing. We were meeting constantly. We were meeting and let's say, sometimes I was staying there overnight, too, that worker who met him in the street and said, "What are you doing here?" He gave him a shelter then. It was a basement, something like that – or maybe a low ground floor apartment. So he slept there, you know. This was his place at that time. And we were meeting either there or other places, sometimes in a coffee shop which he knew was safe to go into a certain room, or whatever. And he was writing a lot, what's going on, and he was meeting with the leaders from the underground. And there was a special place also from the Bundists, on Sharavial (ph) Street and he was leaving there, the happenings, you know, the events, which he was writing down everyday. And I remember sitting once with some coffee and he was writing, and I said, "Aren't you afraid?" He said, "No, this is, you know, we have to leave something. What's happening now." He, he wrote everyday. He was very, very, you know, historically minded, and to let people know what's happening. So we were meeting, I would say once a week for sure, when Mrs. Rouba saw that I am very depressed or something, she says, "Why don't you go and meet your husband," because whenever I come back from these meetings, you know, I was elated. I was -- started to believe this will be the end of it. He always could put me in such a mood, you know, really. "Be patient, you'll see, we will come through, we will take Irene," you know, these kind of things. And I was always looking forward for the weekend you know, to see him. We used to meet constantly. And he used to tell me what's going on, what he is doing, at that time.

Q: So did you know that he was –

A: I know.

Q: --creating the explosion, that he was teaching people?

A: I knew, I knew that, yeah. I knew that.

Q: Were you torn about what he was doing?

A: Yes. I had a big conflict because this was very dangerous, what he is doing. He was exposed, he was going in and out because he looked well, but you know, there are always those, they'll called shmaltsovnik,[20] you know. They take money, you know. And they can always spot you -- and they even took Stefan, that I'm talking about, was sleeping. He later on started to get money from other people and then, you know, telling all kinds of stories and he just cut off with him.

Q: The man he was living with for a time?

03:16:03

A: He wouldn't harm Michal, but other people that were coming, if Vladka was coming in there too, you know, was sometimes... Because, you know, the connections with, with all that. So, I had a big conflict with that. What is more important? I and the child or this? I had a tremendous conflict. But to him it was important. He couldn't do otherwise.

Q: Did you talk about the conflict together or couldn't -- did you not feel able to do that?

A: No. I couldn't do it to him. And the last time he called me, we had the telephone, Mrs. Rouba had the telephone, he called me. This was before the 17th -- it was about the 16th -- of April, it was Irene's birthday and his, and he called me and he said that he's going back into the ghetto because they know that they will be coming, the Germans will come and surround the ghetto and the fight will start. And I said at that time, "Maybe you won't go." He said, "I must go." I didn't say anything anymore. This was it. And he wished me, you know, Irene, and all that. It was his birthday, his 30th birthday. And Irene was how much? Two years old. I had a tremendous conflict. For a long, long time, maybe up to now, who knows. But what's more important. You

[20] A person who, for money or favor, betrayed Jews in hiding.

cannot judge. We were very important to him, I know that. He left Irene. He felt when she was born, that there's no other child who is more educated, more intelligent and prettier than she is, so? He was very proud, very proud of her. So this was, you know, we were meeting, and constantly. In different places, we were meeting. And later on, when -- after the Warsaw ghetto uprising -- we started to meet with other people, and as I say, it was Blanca and Maria and Anya (ph) Ellenbogen, and Boleck Ellenbogen and Halina Ellenbogen.

03:19:01

Halina is also not her name, but, Pearl is her name. And Halina was nearby me, over there, she got the job and Anya (ph) was still working as a maid, and Bolek was working in the construction business. So, we, we used to meet. Sometimes we went to Marysia Sawicka's home and Navel (ph) Halska (ph). And there was a time when Michal was grabbed in the street and going to Treblinka. He was on the train, and he jumped. He jumped from the train and the Germans shoot and it was, it was -- he got it in his leg, the bullet, and he was, he couldn't walk, but he hid someplace in the field where he jumped from and the first place he waited until the morning. This was closer to the evening, middle of the morning, something. In the morning, he went to Marysia Sawicka and Navel (ph) Halska (ph), they lived together. And they took him in, of course. Under, underneath, Gestapo lived. They had a big apartment, Gestapo. And there was no toilets there, you know, so they had to carry out everything. But they did it. They were marvelous, they were really marvelous. They helped a lot, they give such a shelter to many people, particularly to Gina when Gina got sick. Gina got sick and she died, you know, before the Polish uprising. She died in 1942. She felt she had ulcers and she couldn't function. She was

very sick, and I wasn't the strongest either and a small child, so she felt that she had to take care of us. The only way being, and that is knowing what's the matter, she couldn't go for an operation. But this was a Polish, you know, hospital. And how much care she…Michal didn't tell me.

03:22:01

She talked to me about going for an operation, I said, "Never." I said, "Over my dead body you're going to the hospital because I am afraid they might not give you good care." And Michal did not tell me that she went to the hospital, but I found out that she died in the hospital after the operation. And this was in December, 1942. So another link of the family went.

Q: Can, can you tell me a little bit more of what she was doing? She seemed to have been helping an awful lot of people in the Umschlagplatz?

A: And she was working in the hospital, too, in that stupid hospital, you know, created, it wasn't a real hospital. It was just made a hospital. She was working there as a nurse. This is why I had the privileges of being in the nursing room, in the nurses' room, you know, and having these doctors operating on me.

Q: How, how did she have the, who granted her the privilege of being at the Umschlagplatz, and how did she start?

A: On her own.

Q: On her own?

A: This is on her own. Of course, she put on her uniform, you know, had a special uniform with such, on her own, with her hat. You will see her hat, yeah. This is, you know, a sort of nurse. This was on her own.

Q: And the Germans didn't stop her?

A: At that time, they let in, you know, still this was the beginning of this, they let in at that time. So, she took them out, for this case, this case, you know. They always could find some kind of excuse for the official people. She was like an official person. Gina was a marvelous person anyway. She loved this baby like, she was a joy for the whole family, in those circumstances.

Q: You know, we've talked privately about luck and about how everything was so arbitrary. One didn't know from one moment to the next if one would be living.

A: That's right. This was, for example, you know, as I was going to meet Michal, let's say, and we always waited until the last moment before the police time…to get home. He was in one side of the city, I was in the other side, we didn't want to take the tram, and then I see the streets is empty.

03:25:03

I was walking, you know, in the street and then from afar I see an SS man walking, you know, with his arm and I don't know whether to pass or to cross the other side. If I cross, it will be suspicious. I probably should go straight. And I went marching through him straight. And I passed. Behind me, about 20 yards behind me, was, I heard, you know, somebody walking. There's another woman and he stopped her. Why not me, but her, who is probably Polish? Because who would risk, you know, this kind of thing? He stopped her. I don't know what

happened, but he stopped her. If he, if he would stop me, it would be the end of me because all my knowing the, the, the, the prayers, you know, and all that. I wouldn't pass. Because they can always hook up to something, which I couldn't answer or be not true.

Q: Did you look Jewish?

A: I looked like nothing, I told you, I looked like nothing. Not this way, not this way, I looked like somebody that doesn't matter, you know, doesn't pay attention to me. I was wearing a hat, I was wearing a black coat. To look like nothing, you know.

Q: Do you also try to look like nothing?

A: Of course. Of course, yeah. Not to pay att -- not to call attention to myself. I was there dressed normally, and Sundays, you know, it's the main thing. When I was going out to meet this one or this one, this was that.

Q: Could you tell us about this dream that you had?

A: Yes. When Michal was still alive, we were getting the bulletin, it's called "Informative Bulletin" from London, we use to get, and this was underground. And I was picking it up someplace, on certain street, for the whole building. It was a co-op building for the engineers, architects, engineers, and they were all, you know, patriots, Polish patriots. Only the concierge' was a little shaky for me. And he didn't know, if he would know, I wouldn't be, you know, there. If he would guess even, I wouldn't be, he would finish with me, to get some money from Gestapo.

03:28:02

And Michal was still alive and I was, I had a dream. I woke up and I was all wet. I dreamt that I see in that bulletin, I see a news item about "Michal Klepfisz, engineer, was caught while making arms", you know, and was, and he was killed, something like that. And I remember it was page three; one, two, you know – the first page, the number three -- and I couldn't believe it. And truly enough, it was in 19 – late '43, I get the bulletin, Biuletyn Informacyjny,[21] Michal was already dead. It was the end of the year, I don't remember which month, it was the same news item! And he was awarded. It was the medal of Virtuti Militari, the only medal given, you know, to a Jew at the time of the Nazi occupation. How would this happen, I don't know, but this is a fact. Being still on the Aryan side, I had to have my Kennkarte, you know?

Q: Let me, let me, can I stop you for a minute? How did you find out that he was killed? When did you find out?

A: I found out two weeks later, about 10 days later. Vladka came to tell me. It was a little unfortunate the way she did it, but she wanted the best, probably, but she told me. We met Sunday, on my, you know, free day. She called me and was, because I didn't hear from him at all, and the fighting was going on and she got a contact from the ghetto. Marek Edelman (ph) was in his group, with Michal, and the whole group was there. And she found out, you know, they let her know. But she didn't tell me for a while, and she also, it was probably difficult for her to tell me. And we met in the street, in a park, and she told me about that.

03:31:04

Q: So she knew longer than, for a longer time before she told you?

A: A few days longer. I don't know how many days, you know, but it was later on.

[21] Information Bulletin (Polish).

Q: What did you mean it was unfortunate how she told you?

A: She started to talk about other things, you know, tried to make me laugh, this…you know, but forget about it. This is a -- but I couldn't comfort myself for a long time. This was the end, yeah.

Q: Did the family help, that you were staying with? I mean, you were -- did you tell them?

A: Yes. Because they knew I am beside myself. They were very warm, very sympathetic, you know. The children didn't know. So the children never knew who I was. And, so this was that.

Q: And then you had to start again in a way?

A: On my own, without any advice. To make my own decisions and how to deal with the stress. And then came the offer, after a while, for the Hotel Polski. The director of that, you know, Guzik. He was very well known, he was in the Judenrat; he was personagrata (ph). He said that I can go to France with Irene. The Jews paid thousands and thousands of dollars to get out and they could…. They were all in that Hotel Polski, it was hotel. Whoever paid was in this hotel, the Jews. And I went there twice, I remember, to visit some people, to find out what it is and how it is; who are going, who paid in and going. And there was a woman, Estusia Lipszyc, her husband was also very famous Bundist and activist and she had a son and a daughter older overseas. And she was going. She paid in because she sold, she was a dentist, she sold everything, you know, her cabinet, you know, this, everything. And she had the money and she paid in and she was going. So I came there and she saw me, she says, "Look, I have two children, I am not afraid; I am going, that I want to be together." And I told her that I had the offer from Guzik, she says, "Why don't you take your child and go?!" I said, "I'm scared, I don't know. I cannot make this kind of decision. Now she is in the orphanage, she is safe. I don't know what's going to happen. She is safe now. And the main thing is her safety." I went once; I looked around at the people

who are going there, they were mostly Jews, so it was dangerous, but I took the risk, I wanted to know.

03:35:04

Then I went the second time, and I remember that I met I think Meed, his brother, I think, went there also. And I think so. I think it was his brother. And I spoke again and I still, I couldn't make the decision because Irene was safe. I felt. Whether it was true or not, I don't know, but this is how I felt at that time. And I came back and I had to give an answer because the Guzik had to know the amount of people to get out from Warsaw to France. Vittel, this was the town, Vittel, the famous town, Vittel. And I spoke to Mrs. Rouba and him and they said to me, "We don't trust the Germans. If you want to go, go, but we don't trust them." And this was somehow my point, decision. They helped me to decide not to go and I did a good thing because all the people went to Auschwitz from Hotel Polski. So, how do you know? This is luck. You make a decision, you don't know right or wrong. And I didn't have anybody close to find out, to ask what should I do? But this was my decision. They helped me to do it. And this is how it was. So, then came the -- we met with friends of mine, as I told you, with whom. And it was nice at that time to see somebody friendly. And they were good company, you know, meaning (ph). They in they were -- when the Germans, you know, they were working for the Germans, they had a picture of a Polish – Zeromski, you know, author, very famous, you can imagine, when we came in there. Then came the Polish uprising. This is 1944 and they came to our building, too. And they took us out, the Rouba family, the whole Rouba family.

03:58:00

Mireck, the oldest one, went to fight. With the, you know, with the uprising. He was in the uprising. And one of the days, Halina told me, Halina Ellenbogen, when they were in the bunkers hiding, they were going from places to places. Who came there? Mireck. As Halina and I use to come up to meet, to visit me there, Mireck came in and said, "What are you doing here?" She said, "The same thing as everybody else." He went out and an hour later he brought her sugar, a whole box of sugar. She couldn't get over it. Then he was killed in the uprising. Mirek was killed, the oldest son. And the mother said, "God gave and God took." She was a very religious, you know, Catholic. Then they came to us to take us and she, with her husband, the two children and I went to a camp, to a big, big field where they were selling all kind of vegetables. They were coming from countries and the villages to sell vegetables, a tremendous place. And they took us there, the Ukrainians. They were wild. They wanted to kills us, you know, in that apartment, so she gave them a bottle of vodka and they started to drink and we went down. And this we, you know, we joined the other people and we were taken, walking, you know, to that zazielenic,[22] it was called. Zazielenic is green, the vegetables were called zazielenic, you know. And it was an open place with tens of thousands of people were there guarded. We were taken to Pruszków. It was a transient camp. There were factories, not working factories.

Q: Who brought you? The Germans who brought you?

A: Ukrainians.

Q: Ukrainians brought you?

A: Ukrainians, yeah. They were, you know, the same as the -- I don't know if they were the same people, but they killed the Zacherts, you know -- they came -- this was in our area, over

[22] Greens, vegetables (Polish).

there. And we were there sleeping there, you know, just on the grass, were the two children. And then they were taken to Pruszków, to the factories there. So we had a roof under, but nothing else there. And they said that people with children, who have children, can go out.

03:41:00

Because they were taking people for work to Germany, so with people with children can go out. So we have two children over there. And there's he and she. But I don't have a child. So I was there, I saw there a nun with a few children and I ask her whether she can give me a child and an address where I can deliver the child later. And this way I will go out. She gave me -- she was grateful that she can get rid of one child at least. She gave me this child and we all went out and we went to Ro-bus (ph), an old, the next little town from Pruszków . We walked. And we went there and I was with this strange little girl. She was four or five years old. And what do we do now? There is no money, there is nothing. And I don't know what is going to happen to Irene because everything was being evacuated. I knew that I have to go back and find out what's happened to Irene, to Pruszków, at least. And I got an address from another convent, meanwhile, I was there a few days. I took the little girl. I brought her to that convent and I went back. I slept in the convent for a whole night, I didn't know who I am. I said that the parents, so and so and so, you know. And I went back and then I told the Roubas', "I am going to Pruszków. I have to find out what's happened with Irene." She says, "Where are you going, where are you going to stay?" She had a friend in Pruszków, on Olowkowa, the street in the [Indecipherable] 11, and I got the address from her.

03:43:19

And one morning, she says, “You have no money, you have nothing.” I says, “What can I do, but I have to go.” So when they were all sleeping still, I left her a note that I am going to this and this address, that she knows where I am because she was worried about me. And I have to know what’s, what’s happening to her. I was hungry, but I was walking through fields with the wheat as I was taking out the kernels and I was eating this, and I came to that person, to that family, and I told her that I know Mrs. Rouba. She didn’t know anything, that I am Jewish, you know, and I came that I was, I know them. I didn’t say that I was working there, but I know them. And I met them. And that I was in the Polish uprising and my husband is in Germany, he is working. And my daughter, my child, is in orphanage because we had to do, we had to do something to make a living and she should be safe. Is in the orphanage in, the Polish orphanage, a Catholic orphanage, you know. So everything is kosher. And I started to run around to find out, the convent. I found out the convent and I told them the story, I was fighting in the Polish uprising, my husband is in Germany and all the same story. And my child is in the orphanage. Is Boduena coming here? Did you hear anything about Boduen? They said, “Yes, we know that they are going to be evacuated.” So, “Good. When?” “We don’t know, but leave me your address and I let you know.” They were very nice and very kind. So I left them the address, where I was, but I was gone everyday. I did not rely on that. To that Pruszków, to that camp, the big gates where, because it was a factory before that, and the Germans were sending their armies there, you know, arms, and they were pushing me all the time. I was going closer, maybe can take a look inside or whatever. I was running. One day, I came over there, I was almost the whole day because I was afraid they will come and I wouldn’t know, were they going or whatever. One day, I come in

December, they said somebody was standing there, “Boduena orphanage come, came already.” So I heard this, I said, “This is it.” I was waiting, I was already further a little bit from the gate. I was afraid that they would catch me there. So I going further down and I see after maybe an hour, one cart came out with children. You know, what’s cart, the Polish peasants have a cart; there’s a board in the center and there is two like other boards, but a little length. And the children were from both sides sitting, the small children, you know. And they’re heads were going like that onto the board. There was one cart that came out with a horse, you know, this was, was drawn by a horse.

03:47:00

And Irene wasn’t there. Came another one. Wasn’t there. The third one, I found her. There is one nun there with the children, in the cart. I let them go because I was afraid, near, near the Germans. I let them go and quite a while I was running after them on the other side so nobody would, you know, be suspicious. And I -- then I protest up the, the cart. And I said to the nun, “Here is my little child, I want to take her.” She said, “Take her.” I said, “Chodz do mamusi.” “Come to Mommy.” She stretched out her hands, you know, and I took her. And I run. This child, a running nose with the diarrhea. I felt her head, I saw that she has fever. I took her home. I took her temperature, it was in Celsius, you know, 40 degrees, which is 104º Fahrenheit. I didn’t know what to do. I have not a penny to my soul. I don’t know anybody. What do I do? Well, I asked about a doctor. The people I lived with, you know, I was already there about a week, probably. I asked a doctor about a doctor and they gave me a name of a doctor, a Polish doctor. I went there. “I was in the uprising, my husband is in Germany, my child was in

orphanage. I just brought her back, she is sick and she has a lot of fever." So he said bring her. I said, "I have no money." He said, "Bring her." And when I left to look for the doctor, Irka (ph), Irene said to me, "Mommy, will you still come back?" I said, "Yes, I'll be back." I took the child. He said, "She has deep bronchitis. She has infection of all her intestines. You have to give her medication and ground apples and take ground meat, make balls, boil it without anything and give it to her. That's all."

03:50:04

I brought her back and there were a lot of, you know, fruit cartons that sell, so I use to see that apples were on the ground, so one evening I went out and I picked up the apples. I ground them, gave them. I borrowed money from my, from where I lived, I said, "I'll sew something for you, I'll be sewing and I will return it. I will return the money to you." And she gave me and I bought the meat and then, medication, what do I do now? So there was like Kupat-Cholim[23] in Israel. Kasa-chorych[24] it was called, and I went there. "I was in the Polish uprising, my husband is in Germany and my child is very sick, I have no money. Can I get the medication?" He said, "Of course you will get it." They gave me the without the money. The doctor didn't take money; they didn't take money, I bought it, you know? She came out. She came out from that and she was, she was happy with me. There was a teenager, Halina, and I was there. There came a time when they needed the papers, the Kennkarte, you know. And she got used to it, you know, Irene, she settled down somehow. Then I needed a Kennkarte, the document, without this, you know, I am nothing. And one winter day, I decided to go for it because I had the birth certificate of the, you

[23] Israel's National Health Organization.
[24] Poland's National Health Service.

know, sister of our maid once, what she gave me from the, when I went to the village that, on this basis I could get a Kennkarte, but the risk to go to the official bureau to get a Kennkarte is like to go, you know, on to the guillotine. And this highway, I am in Pruszków and this is in another town. I cannot go by train, I have to walk on the highway. I gave her instructions, I said, "In case maybe something happens to me, this and this and this." "What will you do?" I said, "I don't know." "Nothing will happen to you, go." And I went.

03:53:00

I had no instructions to give, to leave her with anybody, you know? And I go with this highway. It was quite a few miles. And I'm the only one there, it's cold, it's terribly cold, I didn't have any, something too, too warm to wear anyway. And against me walks a woman and she passes me by with, we always started, not to look each other in the face, whoever I see, better not. And I see a familiar face but I wasn't sure, I was afraid. And I go. A few steps further, you know, five or six steps, I turn around, the woman stands and turns around too. I decided to meet her. And we go to each other and who is it? It was Halina Szefner, who was the professor of my husband's in a gimnazjum who teach him French, and I knew her. I knew her husband too. He was a journalist. And you can imagine. I had so many pimples on my face because, you know, I didn't eat right and all that. The first thing what she did with me, there was a kiosk selling little things, she bought me yeast, to eat it. I get vitamins, you know, for the pimples. She gave me the contacts. She looked like, I say again, like a thousand, like a ton you know, going, beautiful woman. I have a photograph of her. She was so marvelous, really, gray hair, white hair, she looked like a queen. She gave me the contacts of Mirek.

Q: Mirek Edelman?

A: Yeah. She came me the contacts, Mirek and Anielewicz, you know, the whole group. Not Anielewicz, but Antek, Antek and Sylvia. She gave me the contacts over there. And she used to come, you know, and visit me and when she looked at Irene, she told me later, "This child is very sick," she told me. I mean, Irene was quite well already. Can you imagine how she looked? Anyway, one day, so I had to contact with her already, and she let them know that I am some place, you know? She let them know because she was in contact with them. And one day, I took Irene.

03:55:58

First of all, I had to take her to Boduena. They were taking all the children to big factories of silk, a little for sewing silk, you know, the little things, and the factories. All the children are, if Irene would go there she wouldn't come out alive, being so sick at that time. I decided to go to tell the director that I took Irene because it was her responsibility and I felt at that time, also stupid of me, but it was right to do that, because she would be worried, what happened to Irene, who took her? Because she was told not to, not to give her to anybody. So, I went there to her, this was the first trip I did by train. And I came back. And after I met Halina Szefner, I decided to go to see Mirek Edelman with the whole group. And, because they would give me help, money they would give me, they had money. And I went there, I went to the train and on the way, a mother of my friend who looked like a hundred Jews, I made like that [shaking head "no"]. I approached her. So we got off and we went to Mirek and Ala, his wife, and there was Sylvia and Antek together. Well, you can imagine that he saw us. Mirek was with, with the last

minute, you know, with Michal. By the way, Mirek buried Michal in the same court where he was killed. Did I tell you how he was killed?

Q: Let's stop the tape and then start there, because we're at the end.

03:59:00

End of Tape 3

Tape 4

04:01:05

Q: Rose, again I want to go back a little before we come to the point where we ended the last tape. You talked about Gina dying from that operation. Can you tell us a little bit about the funeral?

A: Yes, Dr. Zachert really was in touch with the doctor in the hospital when Gina was there. I called her up and I told her what happened, that Gina is there, being operated on, and so she was really, you know, in touch with that. And when it came to the funeral, when I found out, Michal told me that she died, I, I, I went to the hospital and I wanted to speak to the doctor. And I waited for quite a while until he saw me. I don't know whether he knew this was neglect, I don't know. I am afraid it was a neglecting thing, you know, just. And I asked him what happened. So he started to give me some medical terms, which I couldn't understand, I couldn't comprehend the whole thing. And justifying, you know, the fact that she, there was no rescue for her, something like that. And then it was the matter of the funeral. And I spoke to Dr. Zachert and she told me that she spoke to her priest and told him who she was. She was Jewish, and the priest told her, "Let her be buried by the name she was alive and died." So this way, she was buried in Prague, of the other side of Wisla in Pol -- Warsaw. And I didn't let Michal to come to the funeral because it was too dangerous for him, he was so exposed, you know, and different that anybody could find him. But there were a few people. Dr. Zachert didn't come either because she didn't, she was afraid, you know, to commit herself in case something happened. And some people came who were on the Aryan side, to the funeral, at that time. And she was buried under her name, Kazimiere (ph) Józwiak and later on, after the war, I sent money to Poland to write down under Kazimiere (ph) Józwiak was Gina Klepfisz. Otherwise

she would never be found in the cemetery under this name, which was registered as Józwiak and this is how she has now her stone there.

04:04:07

Q: And you came to the funeral?

A: Sure, of course I was there.

Q: Was it dangerous for you, also?

A: It was always dangerous to, to go into the street, particular to such a gathering. Any gathering. Somebody can find you out. It, it was always dangerous. But we were living like that. I was going out into the streets and do some shopping or whatever I was doing, it was dangerous. It was dangerous, you know, with my next door neighbor, whether he would sense something and say, "Please check it out," or whatever, of the concierge, you know, who was taking care of the building. It was always dangerous.

Q: Did you know everybody who was at the funeral? Were these all people --

A: Yes, I did know. Yes, I did know. I didn't meet them but I know -- I knew them. And then there was through the connections, they found out, you know, that this was the funeral and they came. And it was Marysia Sawicka and Anna Wachalska was there, the two of them, which helped.

Q: It helped you?

A: Of course, they were, you know, they were Christians and it helped, for them being there, in case, in, in, in a sense of safety. Polak, you know. They came to the funeral.

Q: And how old was Gina?

A: Gina was five years older than Michal. So if he was born in 1913, she was –yes?—1908, and ’42 minus ’42 -- so 34 years old. No. She was born 19…Ok.

Q: 1908. That’s 44 – no – 34.

A: 34, yeah. 34 years old, yeah.

Q: This is the only funeral, the only grave?

A: The only grave for both families. We don’t have any body else.

Q: So it means a lot?

A: Yes.

Q: When the Warsaw ghetto uprising was occurring, do you remember what it was like on the outside? Whether people were doing anything?

04:06:51

A: Yes, I was with the family Rouba and he was going everyday to the city because he was doing some work as an architect, you know, very little, but he tried to get, you know, to make some, earn some money, and he brought all the news. And I was asking him all the time, “What’s going on?” So he use to tell me the Germans are in this block and they are burning the buildings and people are jumping from the windows and the constant, you know, smoke. He can see. He never went close to the ghetto to see, or whatever, but he used to tell me which blocks are being, you know, surrounded by, by the Germans and how people are fighting and, and all that. The atmosphere was, some said, “Ah, it’s good that the Germans are finishing out the Jews.” I never went there close by, I was afraid to go there. Because of Irene, you know, I had to be, somebody had to be for her. I knew that Michal was there, but I couldn’t do anything about it. And there was a telephone from the ghetto

still coming out to some people, which I had contact with, and they didn't hear anything. If they knew, they didn't tell me. But the atmosphere among, among the Polacks were very divided. Some was not interested, not were very, you know, nothing. Some said it was good, what was happening and some were very, you know, sympathetic. But in, in our home, he was coming constantly and telling me, my heart was, I didn't know when and how. And I didn't know for a long time. Until Blanca came and told me this was it. I understood, otherwise he would call or come out or something like that, but I don't want to believe it. Just won't believe it, you know. If you don't hear it, you don't believe it. This was that. It was a very tragic time, absolutely tragic for me when I found out, really.

Q: There, there was a point when two Germans came to pick you up? When, when was that?

04:10:03

A: It was when I was in Pruszków and I went out to buy something. Germans raided up the areas again for young people to go to Germany to work, they were slaves. And men and women. They were young, young men and women. And I was -- I went out. Irene was, stayed home with the people I lived with. And just to buy something, and suddenly, you know, there were four Germans and they said, "You come with us." My heart stood still. I knew that if I, they're going to take me to Germany, Irene is lost. So I started to tell them that I have a sick child, Krankenkind,[25] and Krankenhaus,[26] I was afraid, I didn't know German and I am afraid that I would put in some Yiddish words, you know. Krankenkind, Krankenhaus, my Krankenkind, Krankenhaus. So they say to me, "Where is your husband?" So I didn't think long and I said -- Blanca was in Heidelberg – so

[25] Sick child (German).
[26] Hospital (German).

I said, “In Heidelberg.” “What is he doing?” And I said, “He’s a mechanic.” They said, “What firm?” Blanca and Maria worked at Walter Kinzel, so I said, the Walter Kinzel. And it went just like that, and they believed me. So one -- I had one soldier this side, one this, one front and in the back, the big fish they caught, you know, me. So, one soldier said from the left side, “Let her go, she has a sick child.” When I heard that, I turned around and I run, I just run. And this was my quick thinking, you know, knowing the Heidelberg know; the Walter Kinzel also, that I can get, you know, I can shoot! This was it, but he -- the answer, “He’s a mechanic.” And I run away and I came home. I was, was out, you know, couldn’t breathe.

Q: When you spoke to them, do you think you sounded frightened?

A: I don’t know. I don’t know how I sounded, I just was thinking quickly, and I said, I was scared to death! I didn’t – I was…I didn’t know what to do, I can only talk to them, you know. I was sure that I’m going.

04:13:03

Q: Michal had a very close friend, you had a, you both had a very close friend, Frydrych?

A: Zygmunt Frydrych, yeah.

Q: And they made a pact?

A: Yes, they made the pact before, you know, the uprising, you know, when the uprising started. They met and they said -- he had a wife and a child, Elza. She was born in 1936, was Elza. And whoever lived through will take care of the other wife and the children. This was their pact. And Frydrych told me about it. Frydrych told me about it, yeah. It was after, when I met him, when I already knew about, what Vladka told me, you know, and both of them, when Frydrych was killed

taking out people from the canals, after the Warsaw ghetto uprising, there was a certain village and they were caught and there were five people were killed at that time and he was among them. And his wife perished in Majdanek, she was taken before that. And Elza was with Polish people and she was first in a convent, and then, you know, Mirek Edelman and a whole group were just following. Elza stayed in the convent, and then after the Polish uprising, she was shifted to another place. There were a few places and she was sick and tired of it. She was a young child, very bright, intelligent, beautiful. And in the end she settled, you know, they gave her to a Smith (ph) and they loved her and they really wanted her and she felt good with them. And all the time, you know, changing places and loosing her security. She was very angry and bitter about that.

04:15:59

And after the war, when they came for her, Mirek Edelman came with his wife, Ala, to take her away from that Polish family, she didn't want to go because her parents told her, "Remember, never tell anybody that you are Jewish." And she didn't know after the war, after the war ended, she didn't know anything, and the woman didn't want to give her away. She wanted to have her as her child, as a child of her own and so they gave her a lot of money and this way, they took Elza. And then it started the whole thing again, you know, from place to place. I was for her a mother. She loved Irene and the pact was following me, to take care of Elza. And there is a family here, Shatzkin, who adopted her. She had a tragic life she couldn't shed. Nervous breakdowns. And she always was coming to me on the vacation, she was in Cornell when the vacation came. She always visited, not with her parents, adopted parents, but with us, with Irene and me. And they were like siblings, you know. To me she was like a daughter, really. But she had a few nervous breakdowns and, in the end,

she went to the hospital. Also, she got married, a professor from Columbia. He's better known now, a historian. And that Sunday morning when she went to the hospital, she called me up and she said, "Rozka, I am going to meet my father and mother," because she knew that it will be drilling about her past, her childhood, and this and that. And then she committed suicide. In 1962, she committed suicide. This was Elza. Irka was at that time in Europe. She didn't know, I didn't want to write to her. She could never forgive me that, but I didn't want to, I was afraid. I was really afraid. So she found out, not from me, after she came back. It was a pure accident, from somebody else, not myself. I prepared myself to tell her on the weekend I am home, to be with her. Doesn't work like that. This was Elza, you know? Because they were good friends. Zygmunt was the one who brought back the news about Treblinka, you know. Very active, very active guy. Nice people. So little by little, everything was shrinking.

04:19:12

Q: When we ended the last tape, you began to talk about meeting Marek Edelman in Lódz and his telling you about how Michal died?

A: I met Marek before, as I told you, I took Irene in there. We went to them and this is how I got through it. Halina Sheffner, you know. I went to them and this was the first time I saw him -- Marek. You know, still during the war, after the uprising. He told me at that time what happened. What happened is that the whole group was on a attic trying to get through to another building. They didn't know that there was a German with a gun, you know, standing -- I don't know what it's called.

Q: A machine gun?

A: A machine gun, yeah. In a corner or where ever it was. And suddenly they realized and they couldn't get through to the other building through the attics so Michal was the one. Michal was with Marek Edelman, the same group, was the one who jumped on him and killed him and the same time he killed him. So the group could pass through, they survived, but Michal was killed. And the same evening, Marek Edelman buried Michal in the court, which now, later on, were ruins because the buildings were burned and so on. But he gave him the funeral, you know. He just buried him over there in the court, yeah. And this is what he told me at that time, when I went to visit him. But since I visited Mirek there, I got the contacted there, they gave me some money that I could have and I was, could pay off some, which I was only, anyway I was doing some sewing there at night, being in Pruszków, you know.

04:22:04

They give some money for our living, so I said, "I can sew and I can do something for you," and she was very happy about it. So I was sitting and sewing sometimes to two o'clock at night, three o'clock at night and Irene was sleeping. It was only, you know, two rooms, one bedroom, was there. I was in the bedroom with Irene in one bed, another bed somebody else was sleeping there. And this is how it was.

Q: So how long were you in Pruszków then?

A: In Pruszków I was since the Polish uprising and they took us out to the Chleniec, I told you, until the Soviet army came and, to Warsaw and then to us. In Warsaw, they were before, they came before and then they came to us and when I was seeing the, see the Soviet army, I was standing and crying, you know, because I knew that we will stay alive already, so how much, you know, I have

against them, I cannot forget that they brought me to freedom. And this was already with when people, I had the contacts with the people so people already started to find out that I and Irene, which is a miracle that she was alive, with me. Found out that we are here and Boleck Ellenbogen he was in Lublin at that time, a lot of --during Pol -- the Polish uprising, they just swim through the Vistula, Wisla, to the other side, to the East side, and they could, you know, the Soviets were there already. They just, just didn't come during the Polish uprising, they didn't want to, they want to kill each other, why not? So Boleck found out where we are and he was working for the Jewish Committee over there already in Lublin. And one day, he already knew the address, my address, a car stops by, not a car but a heavy, what I call – what they call the "ciezarówka."[27] The big, you know, they come with, with --

Q: Not a truck?

04:25:03

A: Truck, yeah. He came with a truck and he brought me some food. Brought me all the goodies in the world could be for Irene, and I remember he brought also cigarettes. I didn't smoke at that time already. And chocolate and sardines and all kinds of things, and it was like, you know, manna from heaven. And I remember, I started to give Irene little by little the goodies, and Halina came so I gave her the cigarettes because she was smoking, heavily smoking. And I gave her all the goodies so Irene was, couldn't even reach the table but she was looking how Halina was eating, I gave her this and I gave her that, so she asked me, "Mommy, will Pani Halina eat everything?" So I said, "No, there are things for you too, don't worry." So this was, you know -- and he came twice with the truck, you know, from Lublin. And he brought me food. And the third time came Marek

[27] Merchandise truck (Polish).

Edelman, who took us to Lódz. We couldn't get trains to get to took us, it's not so easy to say. There was one train a day and there were thousands, thousands of people so he took me and Irene. He threw Irene through the window, somebody picked her up, then me, he carrying me, pushed also through the window and he somehow got to through a door, I don't know how. This was the way, this was Mirek, you know? Always caring. This is how people, a whole group of people cared, you know, when they knew somebody is, and they picked up Elza as I told you. People cared. Take Boleck, you know, how he came with food and all that. Because, first of all, a child alive at this time was like, you know, a miracle. I was the only mother. There was also Gabrish, you know, Chana Fryshdorf. They were in the partisans. But he was born in a bunker, born in the Polish uprising, and she went out and she also was in that, but this was 1944 already. He was just born then. And she was for a while, the Polish uprising finished, you know, it was -- and for a while she was in a village someplace.

04:28:07

He was the -- she looked like, you know, a hundred Jews. And the little one, the babies, nothing. But after a while she came to Lódz to find out, she went to Warsaw and the committee was, addresses and names, she found out to be in Lódz so she came to Lódz and she found us, Chana Fryshdorf. Her husband was killed in the partisans. He went for a project, you know. They had for the trains to dynamite a train or something and was killed by the Germans and she stayed, you know, pregnant with, there was the child. And she came to Lódz and she found us. She went back. She brought Gaby, he was very sick also. He had some kind, around his ears, some infections all around his neck. And we stayed together since then, you know, this is the way. Gabrish (ph) is like a

brother to her, to Irka because Irka was the big sister. Another three years older, you know, that's all. Do you know? We created families. It was like one of us cared about the other, you know? And I had two, two towels I gave her one towel; two apples, I gave her one apple. For Gaby, you know, this is, this is how it was. And we lived together. It was a while in Lódz after the war, we lived together. The Ellenbogens and Chana Fryshdorf and Halinka.

Q: I wanted to ask you a question about Irene during this period. She seemed from your description, the little that you say about her, rather than your, your feelings about what's happening, is that in some ways she was a calm child. That she was very good, that there was not, that she wasn't creating –

A: No.

Q: -- any problems in a very dangerous situation. As if she understood.

A: No. She was just, you know, a good child, you know, and she was listening and I explained to her certain things. You cannot do this because of that, you know, in a very light way, not to scare her for anything. But she was listening. She didn't give me any trouble as a child. She was, she only gave me trouble later! But as a child, no, no. She was very good.

04:30:00

She was very sporty, too. Boleck in Sweden put her on a, on a bicycle and went on a hill and said, "You just hold the brakes and go down, and then stop." She did it. Said to me, he said, "You go home. You go in, I'll take care of her." So, this was that. She was going swimming there in Sweden. That is why this is a different chapter already.

Q: When you all meet in Lódz and you're essentially forming surrogate families because people have lost, what is this like? Is there a lot of anger as well as pain about the world?

A: We were so busy with every day life: how to get through, how to bring a -- let's say Chana and I. Then I got an apartment -- no -- I lived with Boleck, the Ellenbogens. My one removed cousin met me, he was in the Polish army. And he was always in the uniform. He wasn't in the army anymore, but he was very tall, handsome, and he went to all these officers and he said, "Zychlinski, I am Zychlinski, General Zychlinski," or something like that. "I need an apartment." They gave him. "This was in my name because nobody could get apartments at that time. I said that "I am a widow with a child and I need an apartment." And then, you know it was a one bedroom apartment and I took in the Ellenbogens. The apartment was in my name, and he was working for the Journal at that time, and from Lódz for the Committee. And we lived together as a family. Whatever we had, you know, brought in, we gave the money. I got some money, very little, but I remember that the Zared (ph) -- this is from the Bundist Committee -- they send me some money at that time and then my family, my aunt, Michal's aunt from the States, used to send me a few dollars here and there, but it went all to the common, you know, account. That's all. And this is how we lived there. It was, you know, a family. Boleck used to go with Irene, you know, for walks. We used to do some sewing and at home for somebody. Anna also with me, and this is how we lived.

Q: Was it difficult to be in Poland during that period?

04:33:58

A: Yes, once Irene was playing downstairs with the children and she came up and she said, "Ma! This boy told -- called me 'zydowka,'"[28] -- you know -- Jewess. "What does it mean, 'zydowka'?" She couldn't understand that. But this is an example, a child comes up. And then there were constantly killings, they were killing, murders. And we decided to go away at that time. It was antisemitism, it was. "Why didn't they finish up everybody?" So it wasn't easy, but to Lódz came a lot of people. The same thing to Warsaw, the survivors looking for the families; they stayed here or there. In all kind, but the atmosphere was very bad. Then we decided, the, the Jacob Patt came to Poland and he said that he can take, give some visas, you know? To Sweden. Sweden was taking in people. And of course, I gave -- I was on the list with Irene because of Michal's aunt here. But to tell you about the atmosphere, to go by train to Gdynia, this is the port of Poland. There we could take the boat to Sweden. Two women, Polish women, went with us, we with children. It was Chana Fryshdorf, Gaby, and I was with Irene in our, in our train. In case something happens, "This is their children," because they were taking down people from the trains and killing. So, once came somebody to our apartment with a gun and looking for somebody. Luckily, it was a mistake. You know, Boleck was at that time; I was at that time, Irene was asleep, it was in the evening. To kill somebody because they had some kind of account, who knows? But it was very dangerous. Kielce. You know about Kielce? This was 1946! We left 1946, the first, the 31st of March, I think so. So this was very dangerous to live. So we had, it was us, some Polish people to go with us in case the children are not theirs. Always the children and if they take us, okay, but the children are there. So this is how it was, you know, in Poland.

04:37:19

[28] Jewess (Polish).

Q: And what was it like in Sweden?

A: Sweden was, Agonide (ph), it was Eden. Really Eden. Irene used to say that this was my happiest years in my life. It was beautiful. Sweden was so, you know, like -- first of all, from Stockholm we were, how many – 21 minutes I think from Stockholm by train, a choo-choo train. Beautiful. It was really like Eden, you know. The children were wonderful there. This is where Irene was going bicycling and swimming and school. She spoke Swedish like a Swedish-born child immediately. She went to school. The people were very nice to us. They always invited me and Irene for coffee and cookies and she was playing with the children then. She spoke. We didn't never lock the doors at night. When Chana said, "I'm going to buy some milk at the store," you know country store, and she gave her a little, you know, back with a few Swedish crowns, she said, "Where is your bag?" A pocket book, Irene had. "Oh, I left it on the bench over there." I said, "Go and pick it up." She said, "Naw, I'll take it tomorrow." She found it tomorrow. So, this was the kind of life, you know. It was nature around. She was playing with Gaby and she was going by herself with the bicycle, swimming over the, the, the, the trains, you know, were passing by, people were marvelous there, really. And we had a whole group. I was always, I don't like to live in groups, so we had two buildings. One was a big building with a lot of survivors and we were only three families in this building, you know, where we lived. And it was marvelous. Everybody cared about the other and we could go to the city with Chana and Chana's brother's wife took care of the children, to go to sleep, you know, or something like that.

04:39:59

We started to work, both. She was a very good children's dressmaker. So we went to the biggest store in Melbourne, in Melbourne. This is Australia already. I was in Australia for a time. And this is in Stockholm, and we did some work for them. And then we sent it by mail, by, by, by the train, they picked it up and they send it. This is how we, but it was very, very close. I created a library there.

Q: Where?

A: In Stockholm.

Q: Um-hm.

A: This was the Jewish Labor Committee branch and there were lots of survivors in Sweden. And everybody was longing for a book, for Yiddish book, for a Polish book, or something like that. I wrote the Jewish Labor Committee to send me books, a lot of books. They sent hundreds of books, they did send. And I made catalogs, you know, and addresses I had, I sent them the catalogs, copies of catalogs, everything by hand. And they wrote me what they want, with numbers, they wrote me back what they want, and then I prepared the books and the office of the Jewish Labor Committee sent them out in the morning. But this was in the evening, I was going to Stockholm. It wasn't during the day, I was busy with, I had Irene and whatever I had to do. But this I was doing for over three years in Sweden, you know. But we had a whole group of friends and, over there. And this is how we – that we came here.

Q: And when did you come here?

A: I came here the 11th of April, 1949. I came here on the suppose to pass by United States and to go to Australia, I had a permit to Australia, thinking that I would go to Australia. I had my family in Australia, at that time. My sister was in Australia already.

Q: Which sister was this?

A: Anka, yes. Gina perished, you know. And I had only ten days. Chana Fryshdorf left two months before. Through a certain way, you know? But she couldn't take Gaby. When she comes to the States she could claim Gaby, to bring him over there. So Gaby stayed with me for two months.

04:43:01

And meanwhile, Sweden also, I was, you know, learning English because I knew where ever I land, I need to know the English. So a woman, a German woman was a teacher of English. She used to come to our neglingon (ph), the place called, and giving lessons. So there were groups, but I had to be alone. I went a full hour, not with a group, and I learned. I learned grammar, I read Steinbeck already.

Q: Really?

A: But this was British English. Another thing, when I came here and I opened the radio and I couldn't understand a word, I started to cry because this was the American English and I learned, I learned British English. I couldn't speak, you know, but I was reading and writing. So this was also, you know, what we did in Sweden. So I came here and I brought Gaby with me, which was a nice thing, on the boat. At that time, in 1949, it was an order from the immigration department that nobody can land in New York, only first have got to Ellis Island. This was order and no, even with visas, not only passing by, cannot go. I didn't know about it. Nobody told me. Gaby was secured, "bamaters (ph)" as here, you know? She was legally, you know, here. But I didn't know about it at all. And during the passage, there was a young woman who really was with me constantly. She was going on a regular, not a legal visa, to her sister here. But she was so, she was from a camp or something, very depressed. But I took her under my wing, so, I said, "You have to go to the doctors,

there was this child, you go first to the doctors." I gave her one child, she go before me and I went after that. This kind of thing. And her sister was also there when we arrived. They let them come on the boat, you know, aboard. So, and I said that they keep her, they don't let her go, she has to go to Ellis Island. From Ellis Island she can go to her sister. I wondered why, but I couldn't talk to her because I was the next one. So, Chana Fryshdorf was there with Bernard Goldstein (ph), was another one, survivor, also.

04:46:01

And so, first of all, I clear Gaby. I said, "The mother is here, she can pick him up," you know, the mother. And Gaby is through. Then I come and I supposed to go, Gaby shouldn't have gone to Ellis Island as a child, but all the other passengers with visas, legal visas, had to go to Ellis Island, from Ellis Island they had to release them. Next, I come. So, I give my passport, all these documents for clearing and he said, "Now, you go to Ellis Island." He talked fast. So I said to him, it was my khutspe, I said, "You speak very good English but too fast." He take the stamps, he put 'pass'. Can you imagine such a thing? I was the only one with Irene who passed. If I would go to Ellis Island, I wouldn't be here today, because I only had 10 days and they send everybody out. In transit, I was in transit. But this is what I said, this is what works. My khutspe, I said, "You speak very good English, but too fast." I didn't know what this Ellis Island, I didn't know what he is talking about. And I got stamped 'pass'. So this is how I came here.

Q: To New York?

A: Yeah. Australia was for me too far. From what, and from whom, I don't know, up to now. I was four times in Australia. Every 10 years I was going to Australia.

Q: You -- it didn't str -- you mean you didn't feel as if you should be near your sister or that was important?

A: No. I was afraid that for Irene it wouldn't be good somehow. I don't know why. Far, far away, Australia. Who knows about Australia?

Q: Makes sense. Was New York Eden, too, like Sweden?

A: Oh, no. I had a very hard time, very hard time. Until I established myself -- who I am, what I am. With Irene being a child and this English she didn't know at all. It was very difficult. She was very sensitive for me going away to work and being alone. It was a very difficult period for me. Very difficult.

Q: Were you more alone in New York or just – were there, were there other people?

04:49:01

A: The circumstances, you know? The stretches of, between one and the other. It was, I got the apartment amalgamated. It's a beautiful apartment but, you know, because they, they cared. The Jewish Labor Committee brought me over. So this is -- I had a very difficult time here. The beginning was very, I didn't know what to do and Irene, first of all, you know, Irene, I was afraid to leave her. The school, she was scared, she was very scared. See, we came in April, the 11th of April, and Dr. Patt arranged for her to go to the workman's circle camp for the summer. In fact, she went. She spoke the beautiful Swedish. She went to the camp, she lost the Swedish and came back with an English, you know? Just like that.

Q: Just like that. So then?

A: She didn't, you know, when she came to school, I put her in school, nearby. This was nearby. So the teacher wrote about her. Here today came to our class a little girl with two braids, with two bows and a bow on top, you know. Very, very, very sweet, something like that, you know. And she didn't know. I remember that once was, you know, the fire alarm. You know, the children run out and I run out because I was afraid, I heard it, that she'll be scared and this girl was scared of this. Again, you know, because she knew about the bombarding and that. She was very much scared. It was not good for her, for me going away in that sense. I started to work in the designing room because I was very good with my hand always. Was working for a while and she was alone home and I had to rent the bedroom. We were sleeping in the living room because the rent was fifty dollars and I couldn't spend the 50 dollars. So I was working, sewing, and it was very difficult, very difficult. And then I started to work at the YIVO,[29], you know, because of the director of the YIVO. With the Conference of Claims, you know. They started to get the money and he knew me from Poland. Dr. Friedman, Philip Friedman.

Q: Phil Friedman?

04:51:51

A: Yes. He knew me from Poland. And he got in touch with me, he wanted me to work for him, so and I worked for him. Since then, I was working for eight years at the YIVO, on Holocaust all the time. Then he died in 1960.

Q: Is it that when you created the bibliography? Is that the first bibliography?

A: Yes. You'll see my name there.

Q: We saw it yesterday.

[29] Yidisher Vinshaftlekher Institut [Yiddish Scientific Institute] (Yiddish).

A: Really?

Q: Yeah. In very large print.

A: Yeah, and then took over, Dr. Robinson took it over, after his death. And I was working in the public library, you know, looking for material constantly. For months, I was working at the public library. And he -- Dr. Robinson -- used to come and put material. He gave me new material to work on, constantly. So, until 1962 I was working in at the YIVO. And one day, Dr. Robinson approached me. I was his right hand, you know? Same thing as Friedman, also. And he approached me, said that somebody approached him from the Joint.[30] They need a person for the archives, whether he has somebody. And he told me that I have chosen you. I was shocked. I said, "Dr. Robinson, why do you want to get rid of me? Is something wrong?" He said no. He put his arms around me and said, "I know you have a daughter. You have no insurance here. We'll probably finish in 1964," because it was ten years the claims confidence gave money for this project and this will be it. "You might stay in the YIVO, but you won't ever have the insurance, health insurance," or, you know, the wages -- I was making 60 dollars a week. And, but she had everything. Irene had always everything, you know. She didn't feel it. And, "There is a good possibility for you." There was 35 people in our plant. I was shocked: "Why do you want to get rid of me?" Anyway, so I spoke to Dr. Patt. He was a very good friend of mine. Excellent friend who take care of Irka, you know, Pel's (ph) wife. Meanwhile, I got sick again, you know, my thyroid.

Q: Your thyroid again?

A: Yes. And so I spoke to him, I said, "What should I do?" He said, "I'd like to see you yesterday there." And I trusted him because he took really good care of us. Hyman (ph) Helswise (ph) and his friend, a very close friend was. And this way, you know, I left the YIVO. They made me a party.

[30] Joint Distribution Committee

Have a beautiful crystal from that. There was a beautiful speech from Dr. Robinson, you know, and I went to the Joint. Then it's sad that it's a new era.

Q: And life got better for you, also?

A: Yes. I could make more money if I would have the khutspe to ask. If I made 4000 the YIVO, I asked for 5000. I could ask for 7000. I didn't. They grabbed me because of the recommendation of Dr. Robinson, you know. He came once. I asked him to come and take a look what I am doing because I put in a new system. Completely. And he approved everything. So this way, you know, it was because first of all I had insurance. For me, for her. That's very important. The work was very gratifying. So was at the YIVO, the working. Very gratifying for me. So this is a new era started.

Q: And you were there for 23 years?

A: Only.

Q: Only!

A: Only, yeah. Up to now I am in contact with – they constantly send me, you know, the Katzki affair. It was sixty years of Katzki and to my, executive director treated me, you know, also, and he said, "Mrs. Klepfisz, you don't know how much we are missing you here. Such a mess." They didn't print one single catalog since my going away. I left six catalogs of described material at the archives. Six catalogs. No, not one.

Q: So they need you?

A: So they won't go back to work, sure. I wouldn't go back.

Q: I think we should stop the tape. I think we have about two minutes. Rose, I just wanted to ask you one question. I understand how hard it has to be to face the deaths of so many people that are so close to you. I guess what I'm, I'm wondering is, what allowed you to keep going under those circumstances, especially after you found out that Michal was killed?

A: Well, the child. Just the child, you know. I was just devastated with, with all my family gone. This is the only thing, you know, which I can keep alive was the child. And everything in my power I did to keep her alive, you know? Because of that, I had to live. Otherwise I would be, I was completely devastated, you know. If not this, what's holding me, I would just give up. What will be will be. I wouldn't do anything else.

Q: Is, is, is there anything else you'd like to say that we haven't talked about that you'd like to say, do you think?

A: Well, I'll tell you something. If I would have to tell this story, you know, what really, with what happened all the time it would take, I don't even know whether I could find the real words to describe. I don't think we have -- we don't have the vocabulary, all these words to describe what we lived through. And sometimes I wonder now, and I spoke about it to some friends. I really don't know from where I took all the strength to get through all these years. I really don't know. And I cannot understand how I did it. I really can't understand how I did it. It was by, what kind of force was pushing me to do this or that, to decide, all kinds of things, which came out good decisions, but I don't know. I really, and to describe the feelings, the life, what we went through, I don't think there is a real vocabulary that has all the words for it.

Q: Well, I know how hard this was for you and I know how much you didn't want to do it, but I want to thank you for being willing to do it.

A: I thank you Joan for being very kind, very subtle and delicate in this respect. I want to thank you for that.

Q: You're welcome. Thank you. Ok.

[Going through photographs]

End of Tape 4

Conclusion of Interview