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United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Marguerite Glicksman
December 17, 1999
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a taped interview with Marguerite Glicksman, conducted on December 17, 1999 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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MARGUERITE GLICKSMAN
December 17, 1999

Beginning Tape One

Question: Good morning, Marguerite.

Answer: Good morning, Joan.

Q: Welcome.

A: Thank you.

Q: Could you tell me what your name was when you were born? What your -- the name that you were born with.

A: Marguerite Glicksman.

Q: And you were born with --

A: No middle name.

Q: No middle name?

A: No.

Q: Me neither. And where were you born?

A: In London, England.

Q: And when?

A: Secrets. 31st of July, 1915.

Q: Tell me a little bit about your family.

A: I had wonderful parents. Dad came from Poland, my mother was English, born, and I had two brothers, and one sister. Two boys and two girls, and we were a very, very happy family. And we had a beautiful childhood.

Q: Tell me what your dad did and what your -- did your mom work also?

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A: No. Mom looked after the kids. Dad was a tailor. He came to England at the age of 14, and he always tells us he had half a crown and a loaf of bread. He had walked from Poland. He had his own business by the time he was 18. He knew an aunt who was in engl -- in London, so that he was able to have somebody to go to when he arrived. And my mother used to say to him, "Philip, speak Polish to the children, they'll have other languages." He would say, "Yes, Missus, I will." Answer in English, of course. And my mother had a beautiful voice, and she played the piano, and my dad was a smashing looker, and many of his lady clients wanted to go out with him, and occasionally he would be out and meet a lady and then some relative would say, Esther, I saw Philip with so and so. She would say, yes, but he came home at night. And anyhow, we -- we were very, very posey family, we used to do most things in the kitchen. One brother was a pianist, he became an artist as well, but he couldn't make a living as a pianist, but he would be sitting at the table doing finger exercises and he'd say to me, Marg, what am I playing? Sometimes I would guess. My other brother would be -- would be dancing with my sister, who did ballet, and they'd be prancing around and I'd be rehearsing lines for a play. Mother would be cooking, Pop would come and visit and he'd take something, you know, and that was it.

Q: So you were a close family?

A: Very close.

Q: Were you the youngest?

A: No, I was the second -- my sister was the first, I was the second, then the two boys.

Q: Was your fi -- did your father go to war in 1918 -- 1914, or not?

A: No, but he -- he volunteered as an ambulance driver, and they wouldn't take him because of his nationality. But he did go back to Poland at one time to report for duty, and he didn't stay very long. He wasn't kicked out, everything was fine.

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Q: So did he become a British citizen?

A: Oh yes, eventually, oh yes.

Q: But not during that period?

A: No.

Q: I see.

A: Before the second World War.

Q: What about your education?

A: A local school for -- from about five to about 13 - 14, and the school is still there and it's right opposite Madame Tussaud's, in London. And it's attached to a church. This is very interesting because although it's a church school and supplemented by the London council and the church, they had Hebrew classes in the morning while the other girls were having, you know, their Bible, or whatever, and we would have Hebrew classes. And we had a teacher and a headmaster, there were three classes. And so I learned a little bit of Hebrew, and of course had some at home, and we learned about the various holidays, and holy days.

Q: W-W-Were you a religious family at all?

A: Well, my mother -- until the war, my mother kept fairly kosher. I mean, she -- we would never have anything that wasn't, and we had blue -- blue-edged cloths for the milk and red edged ones for the meat, and we had the different things. We didn't have a dishwasher, Mum was the dishwasher. And when war came and we were rationed, there was no way -- she would trade her bacon coupons for cheese or eggs or something, or butter. So we kept as -- but the milk -- milk and meat was -- that just went by the board because she couldn't keep it up, it was impossible.

Q: Ho -- how aware were you of the world when you were growing up as a teenager? You were -- were you keeping -- were you reading the newspapers, listening to the radio, and --

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A: Oh yes, and we went over to the continent a lot. I mean, at 14 I went to Switzerland for two weeks with a friend, and one New Year's Eve with another friend, we went to Paris, to -- where she had an uncle and aunt. And my sister and I would go to the coast of Belgium [indecipherable] and all that. And you know, we always had a sense of travel. My father, I think, was a bit of a Gypsy, he loved to travel, and I think I caught -- caught the bug from him.

Q: When the war started --

A: Mm-hm --

Q: -- in Europe --

A: Yes?

Q: -- did life change very radically for you?

A: Not immediately. As I told you, I was in the British Red Cross, volunteer, and the day that the war was declared, a friend who lived up the street was also a member, and I -- she rang me, and she said, have you got your uniform on? And I said yes. She said, do you think we should report to the Middlesex Hospital? And I said, I don't know, maybe. But I said let's get together. And we did. But that was quite a dramatic moment when Churchill announced that we were at war, September the third, 1939, 11 o'clock in the morning. I remember it very well. And, you know, we sort of plodded along, and until I was eventually called up for real military duty, I would go twice a week to the Middlesex Hospital emergency, put bandages on and stuff like that, and then I would do three nights a week after I working, and three nights a week I was on duty in the underground stations, doling out cough medicine and aspirin and stuff like that.

Q: Let's -- let's go back a little bit.

A: Yes?

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Q: You were doing -- before the war started, were you doing secretarial work, or this was during the war?

A: Yes, oh after school I went to secretarial college in London and learned bookkeeping and commerce and all that sort of thing, and stenography. And I had got a job just before the war with a place on Fleet Street. My sister was working for a newspaper on Fleet Street, and I was working for a supplier of newsprint and all that sort of stu -- allied kind of thing. And when the big bombing in London started, it was impossible to get to work because there was glass everywhere, water, and you couldn't just go anywhere, it was -- and things were burning and that really brought the war very close to you. And at that time my mother was nervous and so she went to the country and she took my younger brother. She went to Malvern, and she found a place to live, and my younger brother, he was quite young then, and when he was about 16, he became the inspector of weights and measures for the area. And then of course, I was getting very agitated because I hadn't been called up, and I was -- I thought, here I am, you know, ready to go. Everybody's going off to war and I'm not? And then I got my papers, where did they send me? To London. And it was to a hospital that was built for Florence Nightingale by Sir Samuel Herbert. The hospital was called The Royal Herbert Hospital, and very, very old fashioned, but it was wonderful, and I was very pleased to be there because on my off duty times I could get home to London and see Dad and my sister. And cousins would come and pop in. And if there was an air raid, we'd all go down into the basement and everything would shake and then it was okay.

Q: Could you explain what it means to be a volunteer in the Red Cross in Britain? What kind of training you had, and --

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A: Well, yes. I joined when I was about 16 or 17 as a junior, and when I was 18 I became a senior, and when you were 18 you had to sign a paper to say that you would be mobile or immobile. If you were immobile, it meant that in case of national emergency, you could be used from your home when you had time. If you were mobile, you were liable to be called up to serve with the services, whichever forces, and I had to be mobile, so that was why I was called up, it --

Q: What does that mean, you have to be?

A: Well --

Q: You wanted to be?

A: Yes, I wanted to be, very much.

Q: And what sor --

A: I wanted to be where the action was, yes.

Q: And what sort of training, what -- what --

A: Oh yes. While we were members, every week we would go to classes and lectures and we learned how to do first aid. We even did chemical warfare, we had lectures on that, and we also, once a year we would have to go to a military hospital and do work in the hospital like a real nurse. And we had three days on medical, three days on surgical and one day in the operating theater, so that, you know, we had a good background and it wasn't just bedpans, it was -- and making beds, it was really in depth work. And we were all bright young things and eager to do our part, so, you know, it was -- it was very interesting and rewarding.

Q: Was it frightening to be in -- in London during all these bombings?

A: Well, some nights, you know, when I was going on duty to one of the underground stations, as long as I had my tin hat on and my gas mask, I felt fine. But the shrapnel was going around,

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and you know, you just did your thing, and it was dark, and you couldn't have a -- a torch -- flashlight as they're called here. And you just did your thing, you know.

Q: Were you -- did -- did you ever have any close calls, where --

A: Yes, but that was when I was at Woolidge, when they were doing the bus bombs. I would be out with a friend, we'd maybe gone for a walk somewhere up the hill, and he would say, wait a minute, there's one coming, duck. And we'd lie down on the ground and we'd count, and then you could tell, from the moment that the engine stopped, whereabouts it might fall. They were the closest calls. But you know, when you're -- when you're in the thick of things, you don't -- you don't worry about that. You just care about people not getting hurt.

Q: And were you able to see your mother, did you go visit your mother, or was she too far --

A: Once, just before I was -- just before embarkation to go to Italy, which was my next port of call, I was given a week's leave and I went to visit Mum, stayed with her, and then bye-bye, my dear, take care, blah, blah, blah, blah, and off I went. And that was an experience, because we had to meet at a certain station. We'd already been given a clothing allowance, and we had equipped ourselves, we had to get battle dress and a beret. And we had our outdoor uniforms and our indoor uniforms. And we had an allowance for laundry, three and sixpence a week. And you know, you had to wear a clean apron every day, and they were the aprons with the big red cross on your bosom, and these caps that you floated around with a red cross on the back, and you had these big starched tails. Anyway, we -- we went on this tr -- we had no idea where we were going, it was all very hush-hush. We arrived, and we found out it was Liverpool, and from there we boarded a ship, and the ship I went on was called the Sumeria. And everybody named it the Spameria, cause that's all the kind of meat we had. And we were in convoy, there were 12 ships. And a convoy moves at the rate, at the pace of the slowest ship. And of course, going through the

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Mediterranean, we had various frights when they were doing these land mi -- mines, you know, minesweeping. And the noise was deafening, absolutely. And then, after about 10 days out at sea, we were told that if we got up at five o'clock the next morning, we would see an island where a British singer was very famous. And we knew that was the Isle of Capri, and Gracie Fields, one of the singers of England. And so we knew we were heading for Italy, but we thought we were going on to India. However, our consignment stopped in Naples, and we were housed in a nursing sister's quarters in Vomero, which is just north of Naples. We had a nice time there, we weren't working yet. And there were lots of American troops there, and they were wonderful. They took us to their PX's or -- or UF -- USO's, and we had our first piece of meat, and we had our first orange and our first banana. Things -- and ice cream, which we hadn't had for three or four years. And then they would take us off to dances, which was lovely, and then we went -- after a week there we went by hospital train across Italy to -- where did we land? Somewhere on the other side, and eventually we were stationed in Barletta, which is just south of Bari, big port, and we were with the American fifth army and the British eighth army. They had huge medical facilities and we had prisoners of war there, everything.

Q: The year is what, '43? Or later?

A: Yeah, about '44, I think, yeah. And from there we went by -- eight of us were sent up north, and we went by ambulances, and dust I have never seen the like. We were covered in dust and we would arrive at a different town, Forlì or Reggie or anywhere, and when the fellows -- the troops heard that we spoke English, oh, the joy. And we eventually arrived in Mestre, which is the other side of the Venice causeway, so that in the evenings after work if we were off, we could go into Venice. We'd cadge a ride on the trucks, and there was nothing to buy in the stores, but it was just wonderful. I knew every little bridge, and every little church. It was great. And

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then when I finished there, when -- oh, I think the -- D-Day, and -- and DE day happened while I was in Italy. And then I was demobbed in December.

Q: What does demobbed mean?

A: Finished, you know, demobbed. Demobilized. And I went home.

Q: Wait a minute, I want to stop you for a minute.

A: Yes, sure.

Q: Tell me what it was like when you fir -- in London, your first assignment, when you went into the military hospitals.

A: Yes.

Q: Was this very frightening off -- I mean, what was it like in --

A: It was a bit awe-inspiring.

Q: How so?

A: Well, this huge, big place, and not knowing anybody, you go there alone, you didn't have any mates. You soon found friends, and your assigned to your quarters, and we were in a little house just outside the hospital which had formerly been married quarters. And there were four girls in this house. We became very friendly, and then, you know, you're -- you're a little bit nervous because here's a great ward with about 20 men in bed, coughing and spitting and -- you know, and oh come here nurse, hold my hand. And then they would want to give you their rations, which you couldn't really take because some of them would -- oh, and then we had the TB ward, so that was a little bit scary. And then -- oh, eventually I did six months in the operating theater there, which was really wonderful. Didn't perform of course, but you know, for some of the operations you could hold the retractors and some of the casualties were very bad because near -- there's a famous arsenal at Woolidge, and those civilians were entitled to the military treatment.

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So when that place was bombed once, there was a middle aged man who had a terrible stomach wound, and I was assigned to help dress it. And it was -- you know, you felt you were doing something. Oh, I remember my first experience, I'd only been there a week and a young boy, and he happened to be Jewish. He was about 21, young soldier and he was having great difficulty breathing. And the doctor came up to me and he said, nurse, can you do artificial respiration? And I said yes. So he said, well take over from nurse. Nurse was, you know, leaning acro -- on the bed, and doing this, and I took over from her. And then they said, keep doing it, and if you can, don't give it up, bec -- and while you were doing it, you know, the boy was breathing, we're taking him downstairs to the iron lung. And we took him downstairs to the iron lung, and here's me still pumping away. Got him in the iron lung, and he died the next day, but his parents had arrived, so that made me feel good, and I felt good that I had ma -- managed to keep him alive til he saw his parents.

Q: Right.

A: And that was one of my first experiences. And we had a nice group, and there was some very society ladies there. One of them was a cousin of the queen, Ambose Lyon. And they had two -- she had two other friends and we used to call them the holy trinity. They were always together. And of course there was a dramatic society, and I had to be in that. So we gave little concert parties and things in our spare time.

Q: You sang, or you acted?

A: Acted.

Q: You acted, oh.

A: Yeah. Oh, I don't have a voice any more. And that was nice. And then of course, off to Italy. And then from Italy I got home, demobbed in December --

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Q: Now was it -- let me get -- let me ask you about a little more.

A: Yes.

Q: Was Italy different because it was almost a hundred -- was it a hundred percent military that you were dealing with when you were in Italy?

A: Oh yes, yes, but, I mean, we saw civilians and we mixed with them, and we learned a few words of -- of Italian, of course. We couldn't help it. And the people were very poor mostly, especially down in the south, and these women would come and they would do your laundry in exchange for a bar of chocolate or a piece of soap. And you know, you did what you could, and was just very interesting. And rewarding.

Q: Did you like Italy?

A: Loved it, oh loved it, mm. But of course, I saw parts that tourists don't go to even now. Nobody goes down to Bari and Barletta. And Barletta happened to have a huge wine growing area, and Asti Spumanti was made there, which I don't like because I got drunk on it one night at a party. Anyhow.

Q: Did you eat a lot of Italian food, or --

A: No, because we were tainted, you see? We had British slop in the me -- from the mess. Very unexciting, but substantial and good. I mean, there were no restaurants you could go to anyway. You -- you wouldn't go. And there was nothing in the stores to buy, even if you had a bit of money, you know that? They had to ha -- had to stop manufacturing and making, and -- and stores were closed. However --

Q: W-Was there a lot of devastation in Italy that you saw?

A: Quite a bit, especially on our ambulance drive up north, and crossing the river Po, which was no water, it was just dust, and -- but you couldn't see too much because you know, you were

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with the military and you had to go where you were taken, or where -- where they went. But in Venice, things were much better, and they started opera there, the last month I was there, and I saw two operas in one of the squares, absolutely gorgeous, beautiful. Course, the Italians last their operas for hours. They begin at nine and then at about 10:30 there's a break for two hours.

Q: Really?

A: And it doesn't end til about one in the morning, but --

Q: It's beautiful.

A: Beautiful, beautiful --

Q: When [indecipherable]

A: Anyhow, Greece.

Q: Right. We -- we're going to go to Greece in --

A: Yes.

Q: -- in a few moments.

A: Okay.

Q: When did you find out about what national socialism, what the Nazis had been doing --

A: Oh --

Q: -- in Europe [indecipherable] the murders?

A: I knew that before I was -- before I was in the forces, because I worked as a volunteer for a woman who was a member of a -- an organization called the six point group. And they had six points of things that they were fighting for women's equality. Equal ri -- ri -- pay for equal work, equal rights, voting, everything. And one of the members was Vera Britten, who wrote the "Testament of Youth," which is about [indecipherable] as well, and Viscountess Rhonda, and this lady for whom I worked, her name was Monica Waitley. She became an MP for Limehouse,

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and I learned a lot through her, and she used to talk about the German people that they were bringing over to England, who were trying to get out of that country. So that's how I first knew about it. And of course, you know, there were hints, and of course in the British -- in the Jewish press in England, they were giving out all the details that they could find, but you didn't know how serious it was until later in the war.

Q: Mm-hm. So once you got demobbed --

A: Mm-hm, right.

Q: -- as you say --

A: Yes.

Q: -- you went back to England --

A: I was in England, yes.

Q: -- and back to your parents?

A: Yes.

Q: And so now everybody's in London again?

A: Yes.

Q: Sort of.

A: Well, my brother -- my older brother, Robin, the doctor, he wasn't a doctor then, he was doing engineering, and because he was in an reserved occupation, he was working for Sperry gyroscopes or something, he couldn't be released. But if he got into an active service they would release him. So he got into the air force. And he was training for -- to be a pilot, and then he came over to Canada for part of the training, which they did, and then came back to England all qualified, but they had so many pilots that they put him back to Sperry's for his engineering. After the war he went to medical school and he became a doctor.

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Q: Mm. So what did you do when you get ba -- you -- and you -- what year did you get back? When -- when did you come back from Italy?

A: I think it was end of December, yeah. And I was --

Q: ’45?

A: Yes. And I was mooching around for a bit, not doing very much. And then it was in April that I went to Greece.

Q: And how did --

A: And --

Q: -- how did it happen that you got to Greece?

A: Well, because I ran into Amy Zoll. Amy Zoll at that time, she wasn’t Gottlieb. And we had known each other and she said to me, “Oh,” she said, “what about coming to Greece, we need somebody there.” I said, “I can’t go to Greece.” She said, “Well anyway, come up to the headquarters of the Joint,” which are here in London, and she said, “you’ll meet the lady who is in charge.” When we got there, this Dr. Schwartz was there. She introduced him and she said, “Dr. Schwartz, this is Marguerite Glicksman and she’s coming to Greece with me next week.” And that’s how it all happened, and I thought, well, that sounds interesting. And then I thought to myself, Greece, it’s a different language, it’s a different alphabet, how am I going to get on there? Not one word of Greek. So I bought a Greek book and I started to learn the alphabet. But the learned the upper case, capital letters. The -- the others just flayed me, I couldn’t cope with those. But when I got to Greece, I was -- I was sent to a hotel, the Grande Bretagne, and shared a room with a British girl who worked for the embassy. And it was temporary because then you could look around and try and find your own place. Well, I was with this girl, and then I was invited to Amy’s, and anoth -- the deputy director, I don’t know if you’ve heard of her, she’s no

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longer with us, Belle Mazuer. She's quite a character, and she -- she had been an archaeologist in Greece before the war. That's another story. However, Belle and Amy invited me to come to their house for dinner. And I said, well how will I find it? They said, tell the taxi driver so and so [indecipherable] whatever. And course I could see signs, I couldn't read them, I didn't know. So I thought, I've got to learn the alphabet, at least I can read what's on the shops and what's on the stores and what the streets are, which I did, and I was able to cope. And then I was working for the director as his secretary, but Belle Mazuer asked me if I would do a study of students, and that was a wonderful experience. These young men, some had been hidden in the mountains while the Germans were invading, some were returnees, and they had mostly been towards the end of their studies, ready -- almost ready to take their degrees. But they had nothing. Some of them had no families left, some of them had a bit of family. But they were poor because everything they had had been taken away by the Greeks. And so what I had to do was interview each of these students, find out what they needed; books, a place to stay, food, etcetera. And there were about 22 of them I think I interviewed, and I am still a friend of one or two of them. Eventu -- and the students took me under their wing and I would go to the university dances with them occasionally, and we were -- we became good friends. One of the boys, he, I'm sorry to say died, he became the head of the -- the Greek railway system, engineering. The other one, who is still around, he became a biochemist, did very well for himself. Some of the others I lost track of.

Q: Now what -- w-why were you s -- what was the point of the study? In order to then provide [indecipherable]

A: Yes, so that the Joint, the American Joint Distribution Committee would be able to help them, to find -- to get the books for them, to give them food, if needed, parcels of food and clothing if they needed it. We had a big clothing department. Stacks of clothing were sent by the American

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Joint to Greece and we had people who would sort it, women's, men's, children's, sizing and all that, and they could go to this depot and get clothes. And one of the -- one of the young men who was working in that, he was what we call pre-TB. They were borderline TB cases, and we had a little sanit -- sanitorium for these people and they were looked after. Well this young man, he was cured, and he married one of the girls at the girl's home, that was the first wedding they had there. They were able to emigrate to the States and they went to Baltimore. Very, very wonderful thing, when I was in the States and I came to visit them, Niko said to me, Marguerite, he said, I would never have had this in Greece. They had a nice little apartment. He said, look, a refrigerator. And he said look, my bankbook, I've got some savings. It was absolutely beautiful. Anyhow, unfortunately -- oh he -- he did very well in Baltimore, and he, one day in his -- he had a store for working men's clothes, and one day he was shot in the store. However, he was -- he survived. They had two daughters, and he was no more, but his wife Renna continued, and why -- we used to go and see her, but we've lost touch because she got sick and we couldn't communicate and we've lost touch, which is very sad. Anyhow, what else can I think of to tell you?

Q: Well, when you arrived in Greece --

A: Yes.

Q: -- in '46.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: What -- y-you -- you immediately went to Athens [indecipherable]

A: Yes, oh yes.

Q: And what was it like right after the war? Wa -- did you see a lot of survivors coming back?

A: Well, they were already there when I got there, mostly.

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Q: But had Amy cu -- [indecipherable]

A: Amy was there already --

Q: Yes.

A: -- she was there before me. She only stayed a few weeks and then she was off to wherever was her next appointment.

Q: I believe it was Austria.

A: Yes. And my sister went to Austria for the Joint.

Q: So she worked with Amy?

A: Yes.

Q: That's interesting. So were things sort of more normalized in --

A: Yes, and they were --

Q: -- Greece when you were there?

A: And they were getting normal.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And of course domestically there was great differences because in -- I finally found a little apartment and there was no stove, they had didn't have stoves, they had a little gas ring that you could cook on. But this was normal for all the Greek people, that if you wanted to bake anything, you took it to the baker, to the forno, and he would tell you what time to come and collect it when it was ready. Even the rich people didn't have a stove at home, and they didn't have refrigerators. And the iceman would come and you would ask for ice. And I would go to work, the ice would be left on the doorstep and I would come home to a pool of water. But if I came home early enough, I could put the ice in the little icebox.

Q: Would -- this was your first paying job dur -- right after --

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A: Yes, yes.

Q: -- the war, right?

A: Yes. And --

Q: And what -- what -- what was your day like? I mean, you were a [indecipherable]

A: Well, we had to be at work at eight o'clock in the morning.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And for four days of the week, we left at two. You worked from eight until two. One day a week you left -- you came back at five and worked til eight in the evening, and we used to call that black Thursday. But when we got home at two, it was so hot in the summer, of course, that mostly you'd flop on your bed. You'd have a bite to eat and you'd flop, and you'd go into a deep, deep sleep. Well, I was very friendly with several of the young men, one or two who worked in the office, and this young doctor I told you about. And they would come back to my place because my apartment was on a direct line to a big hospital in Athens called the Evangelismos Hospital, so I had water every day, all the time. Everywhere else they would have an hour in the morning water, and maybe two hours in the afternoon. So the boys would come to my place, and they'd all take a shower. And -- you know, I was happy that I was able to do this, it was great. And they would bring lunch, they'd bring some cold meat and cheese and bread, and we'd enjoy ourselves, and we'd all flop. I had a couch in the living room and two couches that were used for beds in the bedroom, tiny place. And some would sleep on the floor. Sometimes there were four, sometimes there were five, and we would just make the best of -- of the situation. And in those days, money was absolutely awful. The drachma was just paper, worth nothing. And so when you paid rent, it had to be paid in gold pounds, so that your money was given to you in the office every month, and my rent was three gold pounds. Some -- it was

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English -- gold English sovereigns, that's it. And then they had Swiss gold francs, and I think they had French gold francs. But you know, it was strange and you got used to this and you thought, well, this is wonderful, it's another country.

Q: Now these -- these boys that you did the survey of --

A: Mm-hm, yes.

Q: -- the students.

A: Yes.

Q: Were they all Jewish?

A: Yes.

Q: And were they all boys who had been in camps, and had come back?

A: Some of them had been in camps and some of them had been hidden -- had hidden in the mountains when -- you know, when the Germans were there. And then, when the civil war happened [indecipherable] many of them were accused of being traitors. And I don't know how it happened, but I think in Matsas' book, he explains that.

Q: And were you affected by the civil war?

A: Yes, because you couldn't travel. The only way you could travel was with a special permit, and they had put landmines down in much of the territory towards Salonika. And I was in the dramatic group, and the general of the British army was so impressed with our last play, he said, that has to go to the troops in Salonika, can you get permission? So how did we get to Salonika? The Admiral's boat. We could go by sea up there.

Q: And what was the --

A: That was a wonderful weekend.

Q: And what was the play?

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A: "Laburnum Grove," by Priestly. Yeah. And it went down very well, everybody enjoyed it. I was the mother, and oh yes, for these plays, all the office used to come and see them, and all the embassy staffs, various countries, would come, and we'd put on a play once every six weeks or two weeks.

Q: Really?

A: Yes.

Q: And was it a full play with staging --

A: Oh yes.

Q: -- or you did a reading?

A: No, no.

Q: No.

A: Oh we did it, and we got -- we got made up costumes and God knows what. There was one play called "Saloon Bar" and I was a barfly, an old lady who was there always, a regular, and it was quite funny. And then another one was called "Flair Path." And I remember in that I was a cockney woman with a husband and this Polish fellow's plane had just come in, and I said [indecipherable] I said, did you see his -- his plane, it's got an 'ole in it. Really crazy stuff.

Q: And you had been doing plays as a kid as well, yes?

A: Oh yes, yes. I was an extrovert, you know. I probably still am, however I think I did my bit in the war and I did a bit in Greece and I feel that I, you know, helped in some small way.

Q: Did you -- did you do social work in Greece at all?

A: Yes.

Q: And what was that like?

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A: The social work was the student bit, and then of course, the helping some of the people when I could, and everybody wanted to learn English from me, so that's how I didn't learn Greek. And so I would give these little lessons to people, and in any -- in any possible way that you could be useful, you were.

Q: Can you describe some other ways? Didn't you hide some -- some folks during the civil war?

A: Oh yes, yes. As I said, these fellows who'd hid in the mountains when the Germans were there, they were sought after by the military and -- as being traitors. So several of them -- one of the young men was called Alberto Guiladee. And he went to Israel and he became a member of the government, I forgotten which thing. And then there was this Dr. Monaliaruf, and one or two others, and they would come before it got dark, come and visit, and then they would stay overnight, and then they would leave when it got light in the morning. And as I think I mentioned, this apartment was semi-basement and the window looked onto the street and you could see the legs of people, and the lower part of their torsos and we would -- every, about half an hour, soldiers would march by. They were in a long line, five of them, and they'd have the guns, and they would march by, and it was very ominous. But we kept very quiet and we had no lights on and they would just pass the way and fortunately nobody was ever caught and nobody was ever in danger, really. I was in danger because if I'd been -- if I'd been found out the Joint would have sent me home too.

Q: They would have. They -- they --

A: They would have, oh yes, you -- you mustn't interfere and you mustn't do anything that's politically unsound.

Q: And so why --

A: Politically incorrect.

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Q: And why did you take that risk, do you think?

A: Because I liked the people, and because they had to be helped. Somebody had to help, and if I had the means, why not?

Q: Did other friends of yours, do you think, did the same thing, or you didn't talk to each other about it?

A: Oh, we never ti -- never mentioned it, no, no. Was hush-hush.

Q: And can you describe the different kinds of things that the Joint did during the -- you were there for four years --

A: Yes.

Q: -- that's a long time.

A: Yes. Well, I'll tell you. One of the girls in the girl's home -- and I saw her when I was back in Greece last year, she was a very pretty girl and she had been engaged -- she'd been on the island of Crete and she had been engaged to a non-Jewish man who had been very much into politics and he was anti this, that and the other. And I think he was killed. But she was in Athens and she was one of the girls at the girl's home. She'd lost all her family and everything. Her name was Eka. Well, Eka -- oh, I have to interrupt. At the girl's home -- before the war, Greek girls and particularly girls of good families never worked, all they did was learn how to do housework, cook, embroidery and that was it until they got married. So that these girls came back and they didn't work, they had no professions. So this was a part of what was done for them by Joint, through the National Council of Jewish Women, and what's the other organiza -- ORT, yes. And ORT sent sewing machines, and so the girls at the home were learning to sew and do dressmaking and stuff like that. Well, Eka learned to sew very well. And they decided that she had a flair and that she should go to the home that they had in Paris and learn haute couture. So,

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in order to get Eka to Paris was about six months work. And I would go to her the -- to the police because somebody who knew her ex-fiancé had told about her, that she must have been a radical. And so the -- the passport people wouldn't give her a passport, they wouldn't give her any permission to leave. And I would have to go to -- she had to have a representative from the Joint to go with her to all these interviews and police things, and so I used to go with her. And finally she did get the visa and she did go to Paris and she did learn haute couture. And when she came back, she started a little business on her own, which was a wonderful thing. And I'm trying to think what else they did. Course many of the girls at the home were adopted by people in Canada and in the States, and so they were able to emigrate and lots of them came over. And this one girl I told you about, she's a cousin of Matsas, Nina. Nina had a sister, they were both in the girl's home. The sister was younger than Nina and she was adopted by a family in Canada. And so Esther came to Canada where she married and had a wonderful family, four lovely children, and Nina eventually came to Canada, but she didn't like it so she went to New York, where some of her other former girl's home girls had gone. And so they had a little sort of clubby kind of relationship. Nina eventually married and her husband knew people in Washington and they said, why are you staying up there? Why don't you come down here and we'll set you up in a restaurant? He knew catering because he'd been catering ships. So Nina and this husband came down to Washington, and I don't know if you ever went there, but there was a restaurant in Bethesda called The Diplomat. It was on Wisconsin Avenue, it was wonderful. And then they finally retired, and they sold the business. Her husband died at the beginning of this year, and anyhow, I spoke to Nina and I said, Nina, would you be willing to be interviewed if they think that you would have a good story? She said of course. So anyhow --

Q: Did you -- when you met the -- these people who came back from camps or whatever --

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A: Yes?

Q: Did they talk to you about their experiences in the concen --

A: Oh yes.

Q: They did?

A: Yes, yes. Danny Venamias, whose book you have, he was -- he worked for us in one of the offices, or in the sort -- clothes sorting or something, and he spoke of his experiences, and Danny had a close friend who was with him in the camp called Dario. Dario lives in California and Dario is some -- he was in some films, very good looking young man, but he and Danny used to shovel the remains from the crematoria. And -- you know, it was -- it was so heartbreaking to hear what they did. And Fofoe, the one who was married in my apartment and now lives in Spain, in -- yes, near Barcelona, she had some very interesting tales to tell of how they had the sh -- the heads shaved, and they -- they were just horrified when they looked at each other, they cried and they laughed, and you know, they were hysterical about this. And how they shared pieces of food. Somebody would have a nice piece of bread and they would divide it up. Things like that. Trying to think.

Q: What sort of an impact did that have on you? Do you remember?

A: Oh, terrible, terrible. Terrible. Give you nightmares. And then you think, well thank God they're here, thank God they're alive and let's hope that they can live a normal life now. But I must say that most of them don't bear -- you know, they don't bear grudges and they don't -- they're not -- they don't need treatment for psychological things. They just started to live normal lives. Most of --

Q: Does that surprise you?

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A: No. I thought, they're very good people, they're solid. And you know, it is -- they weren't given to understand that, you know, they needed to see psychiatrists and get over these things, they didn't need it. They managed on their own and they managed very well, I think.

Q: Marguerite --

A: Yes?

Q: -- through the years as you would re-meet these people, do they continue to tell you stories about what happened, or did it stop?

A: Oh no. Unless you asked. No, we talked about how they were living now and what they were doing, and the good times. And that life goes on, and it's no good dwelling on the past, it's not going to help. No, I think there's a very nice attitude, and I -- I really was -- I mean, it was surprising because I know a lot of people who've suffered, maybe illnesses and stuff like that, and they go on and on and on, and it's -- it's bad, it doesn't help them and it doesn't help anybody else. Know, when I -- oh, and how the -- the people went to Spain. After the war, Charles and Fofoe went to Argentina. And I don't know how they managed it, but Charles found that he had two brothers who were living in Spain. And you know, in -- in years before the war, Jews weren't in Spain, they'd been expelled in 14 - something and there were no real Jewish communities. Well, he heard that his brothers were there and they said, why are you in Argentina? Come to Spain, come to us, we'll set you up in a business and you'll be alright. So they managed to get to Spain and they're in this luv -- they're outside Barcelona, but I think they have an apartment in Barcelona, but they have little stores that sell novelties and souvenirs at a resort called Lloret de Mar, where I have been and visited them. And it's just wonderful, and as I say, after all the experience that poor Fofoe went through, she managed to have a son. Lovely boy, and they have -- he married, and they have a little boy who is named Kavlos. And they

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travel a lot when the season is over and they can shut shop, they go off. And this young couple, with their little baby, since he was one, they've traveled all over the Pacific and Far East. And I get cards from them. [coughs] Excuse me.

Q: Did j -- did the Joint provide a lot of people with housing in [indecipherable]

A: They helped to get houses. Now, Lydia Escanazi, who is -- she was Lydia Sabitie, she came -- she was hidden, she and her sister Audette, who was married to Danny, they were hidden in the war. The parents went into the mountains and she was hidden in a basement of some people, some Greek people. And they were there for six months and they never saw daylight. And she used to say, when we came -- when there was peace, and we came out of this basement, this cellar, she said, we just -- we ran. She said, we just ran and ran and ran, we didn't know where we were running, but we were absolutely ecstatic. And anyhow, her parents eventually came back. Well, they had been quite a wealthy family. Her father had been with the Austro-Hellenic tobacco company. And so, when the girls were young, they had a fräulein, so they spoke beautiful German. They went to the Lycée Francais, and they knew French. They also knew English, I don't know how that happened, but they spoke beautiful English and Greek, of course. Anyway, they -- the family had a house in Athens, it's 18 Corniavo Street, but the Greeks had taken it over and they could not get it back. But finally, with the help of Joint, they were able to get one room, and that one room was set up as an office, the regional office for the Joint. And then, years and years of work and hard labor, they managed to get the whole house. And fortunately, they had enough money to pull it down and have it built into nice apartments. And Lydia and her husband live in that building in one of the apartments, they rent the others. Lydia had a grandmother called Madame Faragi. I never met her, I think she was gone by the time we got to Greece. She was very wealthy and she had a house in Salonika. It was on the water, and

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after the war, the royal family used it as their summer palace, and the family couldn't get the house back. But they eventually -- either they got compensation for it, which helped a lot -- they didn't get the house, but they got compensation, which was better than nothing. And of course, Salonika was where the main Jewish community was before the war, and those Germans had desecrated the beautiful cemetery there which was on a hill overlooking the sea. And those tombstones are used as paving stones. Very, very sad. And -- oh yes, when we were in Salonika a -- during our play, there was one young girl, Anna Morthul, whom I'd met, and we went with her -- we found her and we went and had a meal with Anna and her future husband. Anna, I think, had also been in camp. I'm not sure, I can't remember that. And who else can I think about?

Q: I think we have to take a break now.

A: Very good.

Q: Okay.

End of Tape One

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Beginning Tape Two

Q: Marguerite, is there -- are there any other incidents from Greece that you think that you reme -- remember?

A: I'm trying hard to bring back some of these wonderful memories. Let me think. Well, just getting to know the people, the ones that we helped, and being taken in as part of their family, that was a wonderful experience. And I have been back to Greece about three times since I met some of my friends. And Lydia, who was the interpreter for our office, she always puts on a tea and invites as many of -- of the old bunch who are still around, to come.

Q: What do you think was the most difficult thing for these folks after the war? The fact that they had no families --

A: Yes. I think that was really terrible. No families, and occasionally some of the younger people would cry, then they'd get over it. But on the whole they behaved amazingly well. They were very composed and --

Q: Were people ever angry, that you remember, at what happened, or --

A: I never, never saw any real anger, never. They were just so thankful to be alive and to be back in their home area and with friends and other people's families.

Q: Where they warm with each other?

A: Yes, particularly. It was a very big bond, the girls in the girl's home. And it was a wonderful thing that the National Council of Jewish women did to set up this home because it was a home for the girls. They had their room, some of them shared, and they were all in the same boat. They'd been through a lot and they'd come through and they were survivors, really survivors.

Q: Did most of them want to stay in Greece, or not?

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A: I think they were too young to -- to realize whether it was a good idea or not. If they had found people and got married and settled there, that was okay, but many of them were glad to get away because they didn't have any root any more.

Q: Wa-Was there training of some kind for -- did ORT train --

A: Oh yes, well ORT --

Q: -- both boys and girls, or --

A: Oh yes. They were trained in dressmaking and I think some were trained in typing. Not shorthand I don't think, but typing. And I don't know what else. Little bookkeeping, too, something like that.

Q: Were there academic courses that they took?

A: No, not unless they went to university or school, but they were too old for that and not -- not really good material for it.

Q: Did the universities open pretty quickly in Greece?

A: You know, when I got there, these students were already --

Q: Right.

A: -- starting back. And they had to, you know, have the wherewithal in order to continue their educations.

Q: Did you see a big difference from 1946 til when you left in 1950? Did things change very rapidly, or slow?

A: Not rapidly, very slowly, but gradually the stores were getting merchandise in. Many of the Jewish families there were in the fabric business, and they were quite wealthy, those people who had -- you know, they imported fabrics, a lot from England, you know, tweeds for men's suits. And they didn't have ready-made stores, so that if you needed any clothes made, you had the

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dressmaker come to the house, and she would stay -- she'd come three or four days to ma -- to cut -- to make -- to finish the garments. And I had a couple of dresses made that way, and you went to this -- the fabric place and you chose your material and you either drew a design you wanted, or you looked in some books and they did the best they could. And Lydia's family always had a dressmaker coming to the house because there were three ladies. Oh, and another thing, although I wasn't wealthy or anything and I was just a visitor, I had to have a maid. We all had maids. Well, fortunately I was brought up where we had maids at home, I mean, they weren't uniformed or anything, it wasn't "Upstairs, Downstairs," but I was used to having somebody around to do things. And my maids name was Salome. She was a very large, round lady. And a friend of mine had Cleopatra, who was tall and skinny. The names were just hilarious really, cause they didn't fit the picture that one had of these characters.

Q: So you decided to leave in 1950 or did the job end in some way?

A: Well, the job ended more or less because they were able to transfer the work to local personnel. So why pay foreign personnel larger sums when they could get the people locally to carry on. And I was glad really, it was -- it was time for me to go. And I mean I -- I regretted leaving my friends there and everything, but you have to adjust --

Q: Right.

A: -- you know.

Q: And then you went to England, or --

A: I went back to England, yes. And then -- my brother had emigrated to the States, arou -- yes, and he said, why don't you come over. And my sister, who had finished working in Munich, or Vienna, she said, you know what -- we had made lots of American friends, because we -- oh yes, this is another thing, we used to have groups of Americans from UJA come over to see what was

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going on, and then we would be their guides around and show them where to have dinner and -- and that kind of thing. So we made a lot of American friends and many of them said, why don't you come over, you know, we'll give you a good time, etcetera. Well, my sister and I decided that it would be lovely to go to the States. We could visit relatives that we'd discovered there and also we could do a tour. And if we got emigration papers, we wouldn't have to hurry and if we ran out of cash we could get a job. So we decided to do that. And in those days it was easy to get a visa. Even -- my sister and I were able to get a visa without having a sponsor, because we had enough money to take -- although you weren't allowed to bring much money out of England. So I went ahead and joined my friend who was living in -- she had just moved to the States, living in Manhattan, and I joined her and waited for my sister to come for this big tour. She was asked to go and help with the reparations -- things in The Hague, so she was delayed for six months -- no, three months. And by the time she got there, I had run out of cash and had to get a job. I also wan -- didn't want to stay at my friend's house any longer, it was not right. So I had found an English girl and we collaborated and we shared an apartment, but I had signed the lease and it was two year lease and I couldn't get out of it. So when my sister arrived she took off and had a holiday in Mexico and when she came back we -- you know, it was too late to start our trip, so we got jobs. And then in 1956, we decided we would go back to England and see if we could stay there, or if we didn't like it we could come back to the States. We got to England, we had a very good year doing practically nothing but visiting and enjoying ourselves. And then in 1957 we were asked to go to Vienna because of the Hungarian uprising and they needed people in Vienna to help. So, both Leba and I went to Vienna. I stayed for a year, but after three months Leba was asked if she would go back to London because there was trouble in Egypt and they needed somebody in London to help with the Egyptian immigration. So --

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Q: And who were you hired by, Joint again?

A: Joint, yes.

Q: Did you work for the Joint in New York?

A: No, no, only in Europe. And because we were from England, we got a British salary. We didn't know the difference, so that we didn't get very much money, but it was adequate. I mean, it was a nice job.

Q: Right.

A: And that was secondary to the work.

Q: And the work was important because you were --

A: Oh yes.

Q: -- you were doing again what you had done.

A: Yes, yes, it was very important.

Q: And then what -- then what happened, then you came back to England or you came to the States again?

A: Well, we had to get back to the States or we would have lost our re-entry permits. You're allowed one year and 11 months, and then you -- either you do or you don't. And we decided well, we'll come back because by that time my brother had settled in Alexandria. He'd opened a practice there, and so we came. He said, you come and you can get jobs in Washington and it's very nice, and you can stay with us until -- so we came and after about three months -- oh, we stayed with Robin for a week or so and then we found an apartment in -- that's another story -- in Washington, and then my brother moved down to Petersburg, Virginia, so there we were. We found a wonderful sublet apartment in Washington and became very, very friendly with the lady who sublet it to us and her family. And although she and her sister and all that have gone, I still

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am very, very friendly with and fond of the daughter, who now lives in Winston-Salem. That's another of my travels.

Q: Right. And so you've been here in Washington ever since?

A: Yes, yes. But not -- we've only been 20 years in this -- in this apartment.

Q: Right.

A: We lived further up 16th Street for while.

Q: And what did you do when you started working in Washington, once you came back?

A: Oh, I worked temporarily for a little while and then I got a job with a law firm, you may have heard of it, Arnold and Porter. It was wonderful when I first joined, it was just -- those -- it was Arnold, Fortis and Porter, and those three were the most brilliant, wonderful men, absolutely terrific. And then, of course, it spread like Topsy, and it's now like a commercial place, it's too big. But it moved three times from the little house we had on 19th Street.

Q: Hm.

A: Yep.

Q: Well, I want to thank you so much for talking with me. [indecipherable]

A: Well thank you for listening to my stories.

Q: Well, and what I'd like us to do --

A: Yes?

Q: -- we'll stop the camera for a moment --

A: Right.

Q: -- and then we'll start showing some of the photographs and you will tell us what we're going to see.

A: Okay.

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Q: Okay?

A: Very --

Q: And who do we have here?

A: This is a portrait of Amy Zoll, who became Amy Zoll Gottlieb, when she was working in Greece.

Q: About what year?

A: And it was through Amy that I went to Greece.

Q: Do you know about what year that might be, the picture?

A: It must be soon after I arrived in Greece, which was 1940 -- was it ’46?

Q: I don’t know, you have down here the last --

A: April ’46.

Q: -- look at Greece, underneath her photograph.

A: Oh, well she was ready to leave, you see.

Q: So it must have been ’46.

A: ’46 yes. It was about two -- about a month after I got there. Wa --

Q: And who is this group?

A: These are colleagues of mine. The gentleman on the far right was Alberto Guiladee. He, I think had -- yes, he had been in one of the camps. He later went to Israel and became a member of the Israeli government. He married a New Zealand girl. The next person is Dario Gabi, who also had been in camp. The next one with glasses is Mario Montiano, who became a correspondent for The London Times and The Kemsley Press. The next one is yours truly. The next one is Dr. Manoli Aruch, and the next one is a Greek girl called Elli, I don’t know her last name, she married a friend of mine.

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Q: And the date?

A: And the date was about 1947.

Q: [indecipherable] Okay, go ahead.

A: This was at a party and we were asked to come in costume, and we managed to get some Greek evzone outfits, and the gentleman on my left is -- he was born in Cairo, he married a Greek girl and they settled in England. He had British nationality because Egypt, you know, was British in those days. The other chap was a friend of Bill's, and his name was Vasili something or other, and he was in the British army. How, I don't know.

Q: What's going on here?

A: This was taken at the girl's home, which was started by the National Council of Jewish Women of America. And the -- the directress is in the picture, I think, and some of the girls who were returnees from DP camps, and some of the -- I think one or two of the fellows were -- were hidden in the mountains during the invasion of -- of the Greeks -- of the Germans.

Q: And this was 1947? That's what it says in your [indecipherable]

A: Probably, mm.

Q: In Athens?

A: Yes. Okay.

Q: That's alright, we're set now, go ahead.

A: Right. Occasionally we were very fortunate in being able to send some of our Jewish people to Israel, and this is a group who were able to go to Israel.

Q: There anyone in particular you would identify there, or not?

A: I -- I don't think I know -- except at the bottom right hand corner is Harold Goldfarb, who was the director in Greece for the AJDC. And he was there to see them off at the dock.

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Q: 1948?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: That's the gentleman down here?

A: Yes. On one of my vacations, I teamed up with a girl from the British embassy and we did a little cruise around the Aegean with a special stop in Alexandria for five days. And while in Alexandria, we were able to visit the sphinx and the pyramids, and as you see, we met the livestock and we were the only people around the sphinx and pyramids, there were no tourists in those days. And this was a professional picture because our cameras were confiscated at the dock and we couldn't take pictures. But we traveled by train from Alexandria to Cairo, and in Cairo, the gentleman you've seen in other pictures, Bill Brudo, he was in the evzone costume, his parents were still living in Egypt and we were able to visit them, and that was quite an experience, to see a home in Egypt, it was great. And they had the manservant with the white robe thing on and the fez, serving the cold drinks. Wonderful.

Q: And this is 1948?

A: Yes.

Q: [indecipherable]

A: In Greece, the house is a speety, and if it's my house, you tack on the my at the end of the word, so that was speetymou, my house. And it was sort of semi-basement, tiny little place, and it was lovely. It was very, very nice. Sparsely furnished. In Greece they didn't have carpeting on the floors, they were marble floors or stone floors and in the winter you'd put down a rug. In the summer, out with the rug. And as you see the window at the side, behind me, that's where we could see the soldiers marching. You just -- maybe in another one you can see that, but that's how it was, you see, the window was half way up the s -- up the street.

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Q: Opposite --

A: Yes.

Q: So there's the window.

A: Yeah. The door is where my hand is.

Q: Right.

A: And you went down two steps for it, so it was not really a basement, it was just a little below street level.

Q: Okay, go ahead.

A: Okay. We had some very happy occasions and one of them was when my dear friends Fofoe and Charles were married, and they were married in my little apartment. And this is some of the wedding guests. Celia Bloom of the National Council of Jewish Women is there with her lovely hat. The director is over by -- by the wall above, and other guests and friends. That was a very lovely occasion.

Q: And that was 1949?

A: Yes.

Q: Go ahead.

A: Here is the rabbi performing the service.

Q: And who is the woman on the left of the couple?

A: Oh, that's Celia Bloom, the directress of the girl's home. And the man on the right of the groom is Dr. Manoli Aruch, who was the best man. And you wo -- just see the chuppah over the top. Interior of speetymou.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Very sparsely furnished, but very cozy.

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Q: Fresh flowers?

A: Oh yes. Probably sent by a boyfriend, I hope.

Q: That's okay?

A: Yeah. Another corner of speetymou. The gadget on top of the cupboard is a radio, not a television set. They didn't have them in those days.

Q: Was it shortwave so you could listen to BBC? You don't remember?

A: As they say in Greek [indecipherable]. I don't know. Has lots of knobs.

Q: Yeah.

End of Tape Two

Conclusion of Interview

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