United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Itka Zygmuntowicz
May 30, 1996
RG-50.030*0435

PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a taped interview with Itka Zygmuntowicz, conducted on May 30, 1996 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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ITKA ZYGMUNTOWICZ
May 30, 1996

Question: This is an interview with Itka Zygmuntowicz recorded on May 30, 1996. Tape one, side one.
Answer: This is one of my poems that I have written. It's called 'The Silent Voice'. It is dedicated to all those who's voices have been silenced forever in the Holocaust from 1933 to 1945. I wrote this poem May 11, 1980.
When ages of civilization crumble to dust
And death is raging supreme
When the Devil is crowned by the power of deceit
Then freedom is a far away dream.
When all that you loved is taken from you
And you are stripped to the bare bone
When all moral boundaries and laws are broken
Then you are in Hell with Satan alone.
When Jews are depicted as sub-human, as vermin
And brute force and evil prevail
When Nazi doctors turn children to corpses
Then all logic and reason fails.
When the whole world remains dead silent
With the exception of just a few
Then they grant Satan license and opportunity
To murder in the gas chambers a God-loving Jew.
When man and woman are kept apart
And new life is not conceived
When there is no sound of laughter or song
How can God by man be perceived?
When mass murder of the Jews becomes legal
Under the banner of an ideology or God's sacred name
Then its not the victims but the nazi murderers who did not resist Satan and defile God's name.
When living skeletons are marching at gunpoint
Through the gate of Auschwitz in long columns of five, cold, starved, forced to hard labor
What power on earth gave them the strength to survive?
When all heads are shaved, all human rights denied
And all wear the same kind of _____ striped dress
When to worship God becomes a crime
Then the whole world is in a very terrible mess.
When Hitler's dreams become a reality
And the nazi's send Jews to the left and to the right
Then such men are not ruled by God's divine power
But by their own burning ambition for power and might.
When the so-called superior Arian nazi race used all their knowledge, technology and skill
To murder 6 million Jews merely for being born Jewish
That I don't believe was God, but Hitler's demonic will.

That explains a lot to us.
Q: Why don't we, I'd like to begin by having you tell me your name, date of birth and where you were born, and a little bit about your family. And you might tell me your name now and your name at birth.
A: My legal name is Itka Zygmuntowicz. I was named after my maternal great-grandmother Itka who was also born in Poland. And my family name, my parents name, was Cim-mo-nella-simon (ph). My family _____ use to call me Yit-cola (ph) In-de-yum-fa-yetska (ph), a name which I like to be called. I was born April 15, 1926 during Passover, the Jewish holiday celebrating _____. I was the oldest of three siblings. I was born in a small town, Chair-han-off (ph) Poland, located about 90 kilometers north of Warsaw. At the time when the Nazis came in, I was 13 years old and the population of our hometown, Chair-han-off (ph) Poland was about 15,000. A little less than half of that was Jewish. My family consisted at that time of my parents, _____ Hymen, my little brother Soo-lick (ph), my little sister Zee-sil (ph) and my maternal widowed grandmother, _____ _____. My ancestors on my mother's side came to Poland from Germany around the 16th century. Four generations were still alive and each one had a lot of children because they came from an orthodox background. So my grandmother was one of seven siblings. My mother was one of seven siblings. My Aunt who lived also in Chair-han-off (ph) had also seven children. My other Uncle had three children. They all had, the younger ones had less because we didn't have enough opportunity before the war to have more children. So we had a very large family. I feel that both my parents and my grandmother were my first teachers and my first role models. I remember when I was a little girl, my grandmother used, who was an extremely religious woman, observant woman, at home we only spoke Yiddish. We observed the Jewish laws, customs and traditions. And my grandmother was wearing a shaytle (ph), in Yiddish its called, and it's called a wig in English, but not to beautify herself but for religious purposes. For my grandmother religion was not just a belief, it was a way of life which effected the way she behaved, the way she dressed, the way she taught us. And I remember that every morning when I would get up my grandmother would say with me the prayers and in the evening she would say with me the prayers. She used to give me coins to put in the push-ka (ph), which is called her charity box, and she would tell me, "Yit-cola (ph), to help those who are less fortunate than we are is our mitzvah (ph), our commandment." I remember one time I was still a preschooler, didn't know one coin from another, and a poor man came to our door and asked my grandmother for alms. And my grandmother gave me some change, some coins, I had no idea the value of it but I looked in my hand and I said, "Grandma, so much money?" And my grandmother said, "My child, you only have what you give away." I questioned my grandmother's proverb because I couldn't understand it, being so little, how can you give away something and still have it? So my grandma began with a smile and says, "Yit-cola (ph), I only give what God and my parents have given me. I'm not giving mine." This is how she felt. And she taught me lots of Yiddish songs, told me lots of stories. I came from a family of story-tellers. And since, at that time, technology was not developed so much so, and my grandmother had lots of children. In fact, when Germany invaded Poland, my grandmother had five married children, 21 great-children and one great-grandchild. Only one granddaughter, which I'm going to speak about a little later, her name was also Yit-cola (ph). I was eight years old when she emigrated to Palestine in 1934, to get married with somebody who was, without her boyfriend, that she met also in Poland, Check-han-off (ph), who was from the same city, the same, and he left a little earlier, so she went there to marry him. And I remember that the whole family was gathered and everybody was crying and saying, "God knows if we will see each other

again." And my grandmother, who was a woman of very deep faith, tried to comfort us and she said, "Yit-cola (ph), _____ _____ _____, don't cry. With God all things are possible." I always admired my grandmother's strength because she lived through World War One. She lost a brother, she lost her husband, she lost two of her children, that was before the Holocaust, and she lost a granddaughter. But she never lost her unshakable faith in God. And she always believed and she never questioned. And it seemed to me the more she suffered, the more she believed and the kinder she was, so she was a wonderful role model for me. And she lived with us from the day I was born. And she was the only one in my family who was privileged to die a natural death shortly after Germany invaded Poland. From early childhood on my parents and grandmother stressed to us children the meaning and importance of _____ _____, which in English means humanness. Whenever I would do something that didn't measure up to the yardstick of _____ _____, they never screamed at me, they didn't hit me, but they would explain to me why it's wrong, and usually they would say, "Yit-cola (ph), its not _____ _____." I use to cringe when they said this here because I knew that they disapproved and eventually I started to view myself through that yardstick. You know, when I did something I felt always will my parents approve? But they also, what they did also is that they, when I did something good they used to praise me. And I really felt that they loved me unconditionally and that was a wonderful gift. But they were strict with me. When I was already a school girl, I remember in Poland was very cold winters and some of the kids, and we were wearing old wool socks, stockings I mean, and I don't even remember how they use to hold up but I remember they were always rolling up, they were like _____ you know and the kids didn't like it. So a few kids put on knee socks and I wanted to wear knee socks too. So I remember that I asked my parents, can I put on the knee socks? And they said, "Yit-cola (ph), its too cold". And I was naughty and I figured I'm not going to start to convince them, I felt I'm not going to be cold, _____, so what did I do? I went in and I put the knee socks underneath my stockings and I went to school. My father often used to come to the school yard because he had actually two kinds of, first we were in the dairy business, like wholesale dairy business, but he was with a partner and obviously I don't know why, whether they, like the partnership dissolved, and then he started to work in photography and picture framing. So he used to travel sometimes and whenever he would come home, or before he left, if I wasn't home, the school wasn't far to drop in and sometimes even bring me some goodies or something, just to see me. So that particular morning, I went to school and it was recess and some of the kids started to say, "Yit-cola (ph), your father is here." And I didn't know what to do. I was wearing the knee socks. And my father looked at me, and I'll never forget for as long as I live, that look, and he said, "Yit-cola (ph), I feel very _____ and disappointed in you. Because everybody can make a mistake, but when a person lies, he deliberately deceives you and this is not _____ and I'm very disappointed." And I felt so terrible and I started to cry and ask forgiveness, so he fixed me up and said, I was still not so old yet, and he said to me, I'll never forget it, "Yit-cola (ph), everybody makes a mistake but only a fool makes twice the same. And in everything there is a lesson. So I hope that you have learned, that you cannot lie without becoming a liar and helping other people." The reason I am sharing this story is because I found out later when the Nazis came in, when everything was deception, how important it is to speak the truth and not to lie, and you know how justice is important. I remember one time I was walking home from school alone and a bunch of kids that I didn't know, and who did not know me, attacked me both verbally and physically. I tried to free myself but the circle closed around me and I felt punches coming all over. And I couldn't, it was both the physical pain and the emotional because that was my first encounter with an incident like this here, with anti-Semitism. And I couldn't understand why. Why are they

so angry with me? Why do they hate me so much? I was too young to understand it and I came home crying bitterly. Usually I was not a cry baby and my mother saw that something serious must have happened, she was home. And she asked me, "Yit-cola (ph), what's happened?" You'll see later why those things are important, because of the values.
Q: So your mother asked you what happened?
A: What happened. I related to her the whole story. And she did not say a single word, she just took me lovingly in her arms and she tried to comfort me. After I finally quieted down and stopped crying, she looked at me and she asked me, "Yit-cola (ph), and what did you do?" And I was shocked. I said, "Nothing." And my mother looked _____, she said, "Well my child, then you have nothing to cry about. Your _____ _____ does not depend on how others treat you but on how you treat others." And I remember my family taught me that my _____ _____ does not depend on how others treat me but how I treat others, which had a tremendous impact on me up to this date. Because they taught me how never to held others, how not to shame or held others because its not _____ _____. But they never taught me, what should I do when I am held, how should I respond? So what I used to do, I use to cry. Because I knew I cannot held anybody and I cannot, and another thing which they taught me, is that no one can break my spirit as long as I don't do something evil. As long as I don't do something wrong. So they actually very much stressed _____ _____, Yiddish _____, _____ _____. I received both, like I said at home we spoke Yiddish but in school we spoke Polish and I had also, I went to Bant-tee-os-kov (ph), which was a Jewish and Hebrew school. My little brother actually started at age three. My parents were both culturally and religiously Jewish but they were not orthodox. But in those days, not orthodox was more than today, just like because we observed all the holidays, we had _____ in our home, and we lived accordingly to the Jewish teachings and customs and traditions. Because my mother was the only one of my grandmother's children who didn't wear a shaytal (ph), who didn't wear a wig, because my mother was a very artistic person. She had a beautiful voice and I remember still how she used to sing to me, teach me Yiddish songs. Because before my mother was married, she belonged to a Jewish drama group and she use to play in the Yiddish Theater. And at that time, the Yiddish Theater used to be the _____ _____, like a regular theater but they had that in the fire house, you know? Where the firemen lived, so they would allow them there. But after she was married and she had a family she would do it only for charity. So my parents very often used to take me to the theater and my mother belonged to a literary group. She was more, she was very artistic. If she would have had the opportunity then she would have done much more, but unfortunately. And I think that she instilled in me a love for literature, she use to read aloud and tell stories, because as I said, my grandmother had lots of grandchildren and children. Except for one son and one cousin, you know the cousin that left in 1934, my cousin Yitle Pash-o-vick (ph), and one of my Uncles who left when he was 18 years old, I never knew him. I knew him only through photographs and through letters that the family used to get from England, London. Because that's where he married and he lived. So the whole family lived in Poland and we used to be a very close-knit family. So we got together and because there was not, as I had mentioned before, technology, so parts of, when we would get together they used to, the family used to sit and tell stories, reminisce, you know? And everybody thought that I don't even pay attention and I was just sitting in a corner and listen and take in all these stories. Another time also that I heard a lot of stories is that in Poland, Chair-han-off (ph), where we lived, there was only one Synagogue. But there was the _____, like they call it, like the study house and a lot of the boys who came to study there, to the Yit-shiva (ph), some of them were from other cities so they used to be on Friday or on holidays, my father would always bring home, in the Hebrew its

called _____, or guests. And then there would be conversation at the table and they used to ask him questions and he would tell adventures and stories. So it was, and one thing also, that after my mother was married she didn't work so I always had my mother and my grandmother home, which was a great influence. I remember another story which also had a very great influence on me, is that we didn't have running water or electricity in our home. And winter, to heat the house, we cooked on an iron stove, and to heat the house it used to be a tile oven, which reached from the floor, most people in Poland had those, and they used to, they were able to open wells, you put the wood to heat it, to bake potatoes and bake apple in there sometimes, but mostly the winter time this would be the source of heat, that heated the house. So when they came on the holidays and _____, they would sit around the oven and tell these stories. And so I heard a lot of stories and I knew a lot about Jewish life. And I was always, when I started to go to school, one of my worst subjects was history. Because the way it was presented, it was just to me a bunch of dates, long ago, and a lot of places. But it was not presented as relevant to our life and I had no idea before the Holocaust how history effects our lives, because history is made by people and it effects people. And I was a creative child. I loved to sing, I loved to write and to read, I was forever doing this. And I was dreaming that when I, after I finished public school, that I going to continue to have more formal education, that I'm going to become a writer. Even as a young girl I used to write a lot. And I remember my father always was so proud of me, my parents, my grandmother, and my father used to take me a lot with him so when we went someplace he always said, "Yit-cola (ph), recite a poem." And I was blessed until this day to God with a good memory and I've learned the poems and I learned lots of songs, both at home. And another source of, I remember that it's almost funny, that there used to people who would go in the courtyard and sing and play instruments and some had wonderful voices and played well, and people would throw them down money. So I remember once I was going home, it was on a Friday, I was going home from school. And those people played in our yard and I always wanted to learn all the songs, so they sung a new song. I caught most of it but not all the words for the first time, so I figured they probably will not sing it again in the same courtyard so I followed them. And I got so involved that I completely forgot that its Friday and the family is going to be ready, the sha-bot (ph) was observed very strictly. And I remember I came home, the candles were lit already, and my father was sitting because the sha-bot (ph) was very strictly observed, and here I came in and my mother looked at me, and she said, "Yit-cola (ph), quickly. Go in and wash up. Come to sha-bot (ph)." And I was so grateful that she didn't scream at me or anything. And I remember the holidays and sha-bot (ph), but like I mentioned before, I was born during Passover, so Passover was my birthday and we always faithfully, every year, we observed Passover. And it was so different than it is now because every single object of the house was taken out in the courtyard. Dishes were changed. And at that time, I remember, we didn't have regular mattresses like today, we had some burlap sacks and it was with straw, it was put in the, they changed the straw. And paint the house and wash every object. It was more for cleanliness, it was also because of the holiday, so Passover was both a physical and spiritual cleansing and I remember, the reason why I speak about Passover, is because it is very, it is coincidental, because I was born on Passover and I was liberated on Passover, during Passover, the liberation. And I was thinking that before, when we sat at the _____, and we're talking about slavery, talking about the Israelites, the slavery, about the plagues, about starvation, I couldn't understand this here. Because up until then, I was never starved. I never had any personal tragedy. My faith in God was not tested, it wasn't a _____, and I couldn't understand all those things. And I remember, now when I think back, I said, I'm not surprised that people do not understand what we suffered because only somebody who suffered can, maybe they can understand but not the same

way. They cannot relate because, to give you an example, if someone, God forbid, has a terrible illness then when he talks with somebody who is healthy at that time, the healthy person could talk about the future and relates different to life, sees life differently, and this is here. So, in my, it never entered my mind that one day I will suffer like this here. That my people will suffer like this here. And I remember also another incident, its like I started to tell you, we didn't have heat but, we didn't have running water and we didn't have electricity in our home, so we . . .

Q: Let me just ask here, you didn't have these but that was normal? You were fairly middle income?

A: Yeah, that was not because we were of poverty. This was because in the small _____, nobody in the small _____ had it at that time. So, in fact, when I went now back to Poland, they still have, some people have outhouses and things, you know? But its so much more modern, its more _____ in the larger city. But at that time it was common, you didn't know anything different because I remember, my Aunt lived, my mother's sister, lived in Warsaw. When my family took me I came home and told all my friends, I was excited, she had a toilet and you pulled the string from the ceiling and I said, "It was like a miracle to me." So it was because this was, I'm describing the world the way I knew it and this all influenced, you know? Because when there was not water in the house, so we had a water carrier who would bring in water. We didn't have like today ready-made foods and, or you could go into the kosher butcher like today and buy a chicken. At that time we used to go to the market which was the market place was the place where Jews and Gentiles had the most relations, was the most involved, because they would bring livestock, chickens, turkey and cows and they would bring vegetable and fruits. The Jewish people would bring what they made, shoes and boots and clothes. So that was the exchange because that was the most time when Jewish people intermingled with the Gentiles. And so those things were, the life was different and it influenced differently also. But going back now to the not having electricity, even though we didn't have electricity we had a light, from a nuft (ph) its called in Polish, petroleum, you know?

Q: Kerosene?

A: Kerosene, yes, I forgot the word, kerosene. So we had a kerosene lamp. And still we would always sit and read and it was very, education was extremely important. And so I remember that we didn't have a refrigerator. We didn't have all the modern appliances because at that time nobody had them in our _____.

[end of side 1 of tape 1] So of course we didn't have any, we didn't have electricity, we didn't have any refrigerator. And we used to store food in the root cellar. We called it root because, besides holding the perishable food we would put in there for the winter, sometimes my father would go to the country and buy like a whole sack of potatoes, carrots, onions, for the winter. And we also would keep there in the winter the perishable food, you know, when we cooked something. Sometimes when it was very cold, I remember my mother used to put it on the window sill, outside on the window sill, but mostly in the root cellar. So one time, in the root cellar it was dark. You had to, you opened, there was a square in the kitchen floor with a ring, you pulled up the ring and there was a long ladder. It wasn't built in, it was put in, and you had to walk this, this ladder down, it was dark. A dirt floor. No windows. Cold. It smelled wonderful with all the different kinds of vegetable things. But it was dark and I was, as I mentioned before, I was only 13 when the war broke out and this was earlier, so I was afraid to go down. And my mother noticed that I am afraid. She said, "Lit a candle." She gave me the candle to my hand, and she tell me, she waved to me, for me, and she said, "Go Yit-cola (ph), go. God is in the root cellar too." And I loved her, I trusted her, and I knew. I understood that if there would be danger for me she wouldn't send me because

she was very protective of me. In fact, I was never away one single day in my, until the Nazis came in, alone. I was always with the family. So I walked down and I brought up the butter. And afterwards I wasn't so afraid anymore of the dark root cellar. For two reasons. First of all, because I remembered my mother's words, "Go, Yit-cola (ph), God is in the root cellar." And secondly, for myself I thought, if I could do it once I can do it again. And so at home it was warm, it was a wonderful world. My grandmother was, like I mentioned, she would not permit me to take a bite of food without saying _____, which means a special prayer. And always stressed the importance. Yiddish guide, the mental guide to her was _____. And another thing which I do really appreciate a lot about my grandmother is, that whenever I did for her a little added. She never took me for granted. She would many times over say, "Oh my _____, God Bless you and thank you", and she would make me feel so good. And one time I said, "Grandma, its just a little thing." I didn't call her grandma, I called her _____, _____ for grandmother. And I said, "It's just a little thing." And my grandmother would smile and she would say, she always, when I asked her something she had such a beautiful, warm smile, she said, "Yes my child. But kindness and caring are not little things." And the reason why the _____ is later I found out how much those values helped to shape me. And also of course there was the influence from friends. In fact, I used to have one friend because where we lived, we lived at two addresses. I was born in one house and then we moved. And the first house, the entrance was from the back and I remember like today, there was a huge field and I used to play there. And one of my girlfriends was a Polish little girl, her name was Helenka (ph). I cannot remember any longer the last name, but we used to play a lot together. And I remember that she used to come like in the morning when it snowed, winters were cold, so I don't know how its called in English but I would go out and lay down on the snow and make a…

Q: An angel?

A: An angel, you know? And with Helenka (ph) we would, you know? And then I remember like today, I was always very happy child and I was playing. And I remember when I was little and I went to the field and I felt such a sense of _____, so I would flop my hands like a feldas (ph) and pretend that I'm a bird and fly. And later, it never entered my mind that one day all this going to be gone. That I will not have this anymore. And then, everything all of a sudden changed when the Nazis came in.

Q: You mentioned this Polish girl. Did you have other friends or other neighbors who were not Jewish?

A: We, there were not too many, not too many. We had some non-Jewish, and we had a good relationship to them. Actually, I personally, the only serious incident of anti-Semitism was when I was walking home. And another thing which also, but that was not, it was verbal, it was not attacked. I once heard a non-Jewish child saying to me, "The houses are yours but the streets are ours." And at that time it didn't reflect, but I could, also when I was thinking about it I said, "What do you mean? My family lives here already for, my ancestors came here in the 1600's. We are citizens. We do everything. And yet, we're not looked as equals?" You know, you sense a little bit. But I personally didn't sense it so much. I knew more about it from going to Hebrew school, knowing about the poems from my grandmother and my parents, use to tell how it was. I also knew good things also about some neighbors, but we had pretty decent relationships. It wasn't at that time, but that was after like, after Pew-suit-ski (ph), Mal-shall-vic Pew-suit-ski (ph) died, things started to change. And you know, we were not treated, we were treated like second-class citizens in many ways because when we wanted to go to higher studies, it started like a few years before the Holocaust, you couldn't go, Jewish people couldn't go to the university, we were not allowed.

Q: What year are you talking?
A: What year? I would say like in 1937 or 1938 it started to get a little more because I don't remember the exact year that Pew-suit-ski (ph) died, but things were a lot better. Though the government officially didn't have any law against Jews, or sanctions, but there were many types of things I remember from the stories that I heard, the family tell and from other people, and from history. That I know that the Jewish people were, we were on the _____.
Q: Did you know about, or did your family talk about, what was happening in Germany prior to 1939? Did you know who Hitler was?
A: At the time? No. I didn't know much of politics, yes. I was like I said a creative child. I was more interested in writing and in playing with the kids and doing art work and singing, I loved to sing since I was a child. And my mother taught me, not just my mother but both my parents because they used to take me to the theater, many songs and things.
Q: So your family didn't talk about what was happening in neighboring Germany?
A: Maybe they talked but I don't remember this in particular. That didn't, you know, like I said, I was only 13 years old when the war broke out. And another thing when I was a child, here a 13 year old child knows a lot about her body, knows, you know? Because I wasn't brought up in the environment and my grandmother was so orthodox, so it was more modest and you didn't know much about sex, you know? And we didn't talk too much about those things at that time. And I remember that in our city there was a girl, her name was Rosa Loberta (ph) and she was a leader from _____ _____. And because some of my friends who were somewhat older along there, to tell you the truth, I knew it's a Zionistic organization. I didn't understand yet exactly the, I didn't know too much about politics to be very honest with you. So I wanted to belong too. And in Poland everybody belongs to orthodox, to some different organizations, but practically everybody belonged to the organizations, so I wanted to belong to _____ _____. And I remember she took me to one meeting and Rosa Loberta (ph) was there and I met her and I said to her, "Rosa, I would like to belong to the meeting." And this was about a year before the Nazis came in. And she said, "Yit-cola (ph), you have to wait _____ because it starts from _____." And when _____ came I no longer could do it. And later, I don't know if you know about Rosa Loberta (ph), she was . . .
Q: Did she impress you at the time?
A: Yes. She was a very happy person and from what everybody told me a tremendous leader. Very, very much for Israel. She was very much involved in Zionist and she was hoping that, very much involved. You know, the older children, because I was _____ and I think because of my grandmother I didn't, I was more in the religious influence, but I also was lucky because I had all other influence from my parents who took me to the theaters, who took me to Jewish plays and every summer we would go to the country and _____, cousins, from Warsaw, because I had cousins there, I had _____ cousins, the _____, so we would get together. And I remember like today, I used to be so happy to go with my mother and she was very affectionate, she was very warm. And I remember, I'm not a thinker, but my mother, which also made a great influence, that she instilled in me a love for literature and for singing and everything. Is that when we lived in Poland, we didn't have closets like we have now. We had what they called a French amour' (ph) and it was a wooden chest that reached almost from the floor to the ceiling and it had two doors. Facing the chest, the right-hand side was wider, it was used for the wardrobe, and the left side was for linen and the very highest it had hats of my grandmother's and my mother's, hats lying there. And for some reason, when I was younger, this was still a pre-schooler, this was always locked, this side of the wardrobe. And I couldn't understand why, I was so curious and I

used to try to play all kinds of games to try to guess what is in that chest. And I used to think, maybe a treasure, maybe a skeleton, I even used to went so far as to think that maybe I am adopted and they don't want me to know that I am adopted and they are hiding the papers. It was a whole source of curiosity for me. And I remember one day my mother said, "Yit-cola (ph), please come. Come here. I want to show you something." She took out the key and she opened the chest. And I had like two kinds of emotions. In one way, I was burning with curiosity to see what is in the chest that was constantly closed. And on the other hand, I was frightened, what I'm going to find there? What is there? And she opened the chest and she said, "Look Yit-cola (ph)." And it was a whole chest full of books, all leather-bound books. And she took out a book, pointed to the closet, she said, "Yit-cola (ph), when you will learn how to read, you will be with the greatest minds. You can sit right here in Chair-hon-off (ph), you will see the world through great poets and writers and you will travel all over the world." And she took out a book, she took me on her knee, and she started to read. And this became a daily ritual to which I looked forward. And I was quite young when I knew a lot of Yiddish literature and Yiddish plays and poetry because my mother never read to me little children's stories, she started with this grown up stuff. And one story that I wanted to relate, which was written by _____ _____, a Yiddish writer, it was called _____ _____, Bunchos (ph) of the Silent. I remember many stories, but this story I'm relating to you because I've been thinking about it most of the time when I was in Auschwitz. And the story is about a young child, about a man actually who was called Bunchos (ph), _____ _____ which means silent. And this man, when he was a little child, lost his mother and became an orphan, only had his father. At the age of 13, the father remarried and took a very cruel woman who abused the little boy. She would eat well but she would starve him. She made him chop wood barefoot in the winter. He never had a new change of clothes. They didn't send him to school. Didn't have a friend. But no matter what she, he was constantly lonely, but he never complained, not even to his father. And one time, in the middle of the winter, in a drunken stupor, his father threw him out in the middle of the night, dragged him out by the hair. He picked himself up and he left and he was going from place to place. He wandered into a big city and for no reason known to him he was put in jail. And then he was, for the same unknown reason to him, he was let go. But he was still silent. Never complained. Then the story relates how he suffered also, starvation, looking for job, and worse than the job was looking for the job, and then people wouldn't pay him. He was constantly abused but Buncho (ph) was always silent. And then he married a woman who already had a child. And it was a little boy, a baby. And she left him with the child and he raised the child, when the boy was 15 years old, he threw him out from the house. But Buncho (ph) was again silent. And it relates the whole story, a beautiful story. It kept me so in suspense. I remember it today. Actually when I learned to read Yiddish, which I learned to read well, I read many of the books which my mother had in that chest. And the reason why she kept it locked is because I was the oldest child and she was afraid that the little children might damage her books. Later, when we were older, the chest was open when we learned to respect it. But its just the values that she had. So this man was constantly abused and later somebody run him over with a horse and wagon. And even in the hospital where people are allowed to complain, he was still silent. And in silence he lived and in silence he died. And after he was buried they put a piece of wood and a marker on his grave and the wind blew away the marker and the gravedigger's wife found it and used it to light the, to heat the stove. So he didn't even have a grave or anything. And then, but it was different, the writer says, in the other world, the world where there is justice. And when he came up, they told him, "Buncho (ph), here in heaven everything is yours. Whatever you want. Pick, choose." And he couldn't believe it. Why would somebody be so good to him in the

other world where they were so cruel to him here? And yet, Buncho (ph) didn't complain. Not to man, not to God, never, he was envious that somebody had more. So finally they said, "Buncho (ph), what would you like?" And he couldn't believe it. And finally he said, "Well, your Excellency, all I would like is every morning for breakfast a hot roll with butter." And when I was, later during the Nazis, I was thinking very much about this story because I realized why he was silent. He had no choice. And also, what would we give for a piece of bread. So the literature, and also another thing which I often think about this story, is that Paris (ph) who was a great Yiddish writer, that he wrote about one man and this has become a Yiddish classic. This book is in English still and its beautiful. I didn't go into all the details because it would be too long, but the basic thing is, the cruelty. And when he says here that they look, why was he silent? He didn't have to be silent, he should have cried out. But when the Nazis came in, I realized that I became like Buncho (ph) the Silent. When Germany invaded Poland, the first thing of the hometown, the first thing I remember, because at that time we lived in the other house already. And our house was strict _____, which was near Warsaw Street, which was the main street. And as soon as we came out, this was almost in the corner, was a large house and they had a cellar, they had like big cellars. So when the air raids was, we went to hiding, into hiding. And even there, sitting there, my mother tried to calm us down with telling us stories. She was such a wonderful story-teller and she knew so much literature and so many plays. And then, when they just came in, we were still allowed to move from place to place, so people started to run. People from Warsaw came to small towns. Other people came to different places. And my father's entire family, his sisters, three sisters, one natural sister and two half-sisters, because his father died when he was a young boy, and my father was born in Pull-tos (ph), Poland. So they still lived with the children and, I think, their nieces and nephews, they lived in Pull-tos (ph). And we didn't know what's happened to them because, so my father was going to go, I remember today the conversation between my parents, he said, "Let's go to Pull-tos (ph). My sisters are gone." Because both parents, like, I never knew my grandparents on my father's side, so he held the responsibilities being the oldest child, to take care of them. But we didn't know, we didn't go. And then, when they took Warsaw, we could no longer go from place to place. That's when the Nazis begun their systematic destruction.

Q: Did the Germans come into your town? Were there bombings? Did the soldiers actually come in?

A: The soldiers came in. There was bombing. And, I just told you, we went into hiding. And then when the bombing stopped, I'll tell you what my grandmother did. It's almost ironic. My grandmother lived through World War One, so she remembered a different kind of Germany. Because she remembered a Germany not at war against civilian people, women and children especially targets, and Jewish people. So she baked a cake and she said, "Yit-cola (ph), take it out to the poor soldiers that are away from home." She was a very compassionate woman. She had nothing to do with political _____, and she asked me to bring it out. So later when they, I think it was towards the end of, they came in October, I mean September 1, 1939. At that time was about 3,300,000 Jews in Poland. Ninety-percent have perished. And most of those, the ten percent who survived, mostly survived in the USSR Because there were no ghettos. There was no concentration, no gas chambers, you know, concentration camps with gas chambers. They also have suffered.

Q: Okay, tell me your story.

A: So, anyhow. When the Nazis came in to the other cities, that was the last time that I saw my relatives. All the other relatives that lived in the other towns because we could no longer travel from place to place. They started by taking up the spiritual and the community leaders, the

intelligencia (ph). Some Polish people too. And they took them away some, they shot, the ones they took away, I didn't see what they did with them so I can only bear witness for what I saw. And they started to destroy the Synagogues, the Holy Scriptures. They confiscated all our businesses. We didn't have, in Check-hon-off (ph) a business. My father was, like I said, I told you before. And they started to put on curfews. We were not allowed to congregate in large groups. I could no longer, we could no longer go to school, all schools were closed. All social Temples were closed. We had to wear a yellow star. We were not allowed to walk on the pavement, just in the street. And we had to give up, everyday when we're told this is the worst, something worst happened. Everyday they made new laws. And we were not allowed any longer to observe the Jewish laws because they burned, not openly, they had to do it in hiding.

Q: How soon did this happen after they came in?

A: Well the burnings, they started to burn books. I told you, my mother valued so much book and its still such a love for me, for books, and here they started to burn the Holy, all the books that was from the Yi-shiv-as (ph) and all the books from the Synagogue, in the Synagogue, they burned down everything. So they started to just destruction right away, and curfews, and we were not allowed to congregate in large groups, you know, for religious people, to go for _____, which is you have to have 10 people to have for the prayers. So all those things were, actually religious people suffered the most. They started to, when they saw elderly men, most of the people, my father didn't have a beard, he was clean-shaven, but so many other people did. So they laughed, they started to pull out the beard or they would shave off half a beard. They started to torture, to mock. Because to, they did whatever they wanted. They had all legal rights to do those things. And then they confiscated the business, they looted the merchandise. They started to ration the food and started starvation. And also we had to, they would grab people to do the work in the street. And after a whole day's work, they would come home and would have to stay in long lines to get a small ration, a very small ration. So right away we started to starve. Couldn't go to school. And in other _____ country the most important right is the right to protest, to speak up. But you couldn't. So that's when I was thinking a lot about starvation, about Buncho (ph) the Silent. That we had to be silent, you know, in order to survive. And then something happened which effected me very much personally, and my mother. They asked us to give up all our valuables, gold and valuables, so we become impoverished and we had to do forced labor. So one day, and also there was a law, that the Jewish people, for the Germans to associate with Jewish people was _____ because they singled us out as an inferior race. And we were not allowed to have any transactions, not business, not social, not sexual, because for the Nazi and the Jew, if this would happen, it would be punished. And we had a big _____ and one time a man, a civilian, until this day I don't know his name, but I remember the incident very clearly because I was also involved in it. A man came in and he was selling household articles. Since people, most people gave up the money because they didn't want to risk, if they are caught for whatever you did against the law, it was punishable by death. And even without any reason they shot and they killed and they tortured. But anyhow, so when he came in a lot of people, just for curiosity, came and looked. And one man walked by, his name was Cal-fus (ph). He was the owner of the building where I went to school. And he walked by too and he came in. And my mother all of a sudden realized that if somebody is going to see us standing and having any business transaction with somebody who is not Jewish, and we didn't know whether he was Polish or whether he was German, because there was a lot of _____ _____, that is somebody who is of German descent but he didn't live in Poland. So she said, she was afraid, so she said, "Please come into my house." She invited everybody. And Cal-fus (ph) obviously took a risk and he didn't give away all the money. So he

bought maybe 90 percent of the merchandise. My mother didn't buy anything. We gave up the merchandise, you know? Maybe he hid a little bit because I remember, but before we came to the ghetto I remember seeing my mother taking out from her corset, you know women were wearing corsets, and it was like a bone, like a plastic bone, she pulled this out and she made rolls of money and she stuffed it in so they could hide it on them, so they must have saved some money but maybe she didn't want to spend it or whatever. But anyhow, the Nazis left, I mean the, Cal-fus (ph) left, the people left and this man, who was selling the merchandise. But it didn't take long, this same man brought the Gestapo into our house and denounced my mother. And they asked my mother, "Who is the man who brought the merchandise, because he told us." And that is the first time in my life that I heard my mother lie. She said she didn't know. But she did know who he was. He was not a personal friend so we were not very involved with him, but we knew who Cal-fus (ph) is, I knew him very well because, like I said, I went to school there. So after . . .

End of Tape 1.

Tape 2

A: So, I was telling you of the story about, when this man who sold the household articles that we didn't know brought the Gestapo to our house and they interrogated my mother. They wanted her to tell who Cal-fus (ph) was. And, I'm not sure whether I mentioned this, that this was the first time I heard my mother lying. That she said she didn't know, she denied it. So after interrogated for quite a while, they saw that they cannot get out of her anything. They took her away. The Gestapo took her away. I was by that time 13 years old, and I saw already the cruelty, what's going on, they started many destructions, many people were already killed and tortured. So I was afraid to be separated from my mother. So I run after her. And I was determined, no matter what's going to happen, I'm not going to leave her alone. So they kept on chasing me away. And finally, one of them said, "Take her too." And I was almost happy that they took me too because I think that whatever happened, otherwise I won't even know if they take her away, I want to know what's happened to her. And they brought us to the Gestapo, the station, and they separated us. They took my mother in to a separate room. This, I was not an eye-witness, I was an ear-witness. And, what I heard, it sounded like they were beating her and she was screaming. The shouts got louder and louder and after a while it was silent. That's when my heart almost stopped too, because as long as she was screaming, I knew that she's still alive. But when it was silent, I had no longer any knowledge, whether she's still alive, whether she's conscious. And what seemed to me like an eternity, I cannot estimate how long it took, but finally the doors swung open. Two Gestapos, each holding her under the armpit, dragging her across the floor. And took me in, to be next. And I wanted to see whether my mother, I saw she was bleeding, and I wanted to see whether she is still alive. So I looked at her, while they took me out, took her out, they took me into the same place. And she didn't say anything, but she gave me a sign not to say anything. And I loved my mother because she always loved me so much and I knew what kind of a person she was. So I was, when they started to ask me questions I said, "I don't know it." I lied too. Deliberately. And they started to beat me and I was screaming, and my mother heard me scream but she didn't say anything. And after I was beaten quite well, they, because we spoke Yiddish at home, and Yiddish is similar to German, they understood, that they said, "Gin-nook (ph)". Enough. _____ _____ _____ _____, which means maybe we don't know. Maybe _____ we don't know. And that's when they released us. This story begun in 1939, shortly after Germany invaded Poland. I didn't see anymore Cal-fus (ph). I didn't know what's happened to him. At that time, the Nazis used all kinds of techniques. They reversed, you see, Hitler's laws were a reversal of all the Jewish laws. We, in Judaism, in home and in Hebrew school, they taught us that we are all responsible for one another. What they did is that if one person did something wrong, they punished us all. Group punishment for individual action. So, and ironically, what was legally ours they took away by force and we were punished for trying to keep it or to have it. So I didn't know what's happened to the Cal-fus (ph) family but what we knew, both my mother and I, is that if we would have told they would have killed the whole family, not just the father. And I'm going to stop here because I don't want to lose the end of this story because this story had a tremendous impact on me. And I'm going to skip and come back later to 1939. I'm going now to 1981 when I went to the world gathering of Jewish Holocaust survivors, okay?

Q: Okay.

A: And when we came, only Jewish survivors, there was some people before I left that they wanted me to be in a documentary, to be a witness in a documentary. And I told them that story. Anyhow, when we came there, each of us, I'm not going to go into the whole, direct to the story, each of us got a badge and it says, on mine it says, Itka Zygmuntowicz USA. That was all. And as I was

standing, this was the last date when we were marched into the courtyard, you know? And Menachem Bacon was the President there. And I was overwhelmed with emotion to think from the gates of Auschwitz, to come now to the gates of Jerusalem and after so many, more than 2,000 years, to have our homeland, and then I understood already what it means to have our homeland, then people cannot tell you, "The houses are yours but the streets are ours." And I was overwhelmed. And I was so eager to go to march, and that march as a free person, as a proud Jew, but they asked me not to because they needed me to bear testimony in case I see something or to ask questions. And as the people are marching and I'm standing there, all of a sudden I said to myself, "Can I have a marker or a pen?" And I wrote on my badge, Fri-mand (ph), Check-hon-off (ph), Poland and Auschwitz. I figured in case somebody recognized, you know, walks by, they do not recognize me. I was 13 when the war broke out and now I am an adult. My name has changed. Who will know me? And as I stand there, Kentel Vee-che-nya (ph) from Lindstrom, Pennsylvania (ph) was bringing the American flag as a gift to Menachem Bacon. And he looked at my badge, he said, "You're from Chair-hon-off (ph)?" And I said, "Yes, Chair-hon-off (ph)." And with him walked another man and he said, "I'm from Chair-hon-off (ph) too." And I said, "Who are you?" And he said, "Cal-hus (ph)." And I went berserk. I started to cry and to laugh and I was so excited and he had the matches, holding the cup, and the people who were interviewing him said, "Ask him for the address." So I asked him for the address and before he gave _____ I said, "Are you the son or the father?" Because he looked too young to be the father. He said, "I'm Cal-hus's (ph) son." And he gave us a card, he lives in Natan-alia (ph), Israel because after the war he went to Israel, and he married an Israeli-Jewish _____. And we went there to interview him too. And I found out his father, unfortunately, died in Auschwitz, was murdered in Auschwitz. But he and another brother survived. And both are married and have children and grandchildren. And that's when I was understood, my grandmother's saying, that you only have what you give away. And that you don't have to be rich or famous and you can give away _____, good deed and your _____ _____, and three generations. When I was in 1981, alive because of our sacrifice. And that's when I learned spiritual resistance, from my mother. And I learned what _____ _____ is. What to do with humanness. And now you understand why I was sharing with you the lessons, what my mother said. _____ _____ doesn't depend, and then I'm going back to 1939, but I felt, I wanted to finish and complete the story so that you will know. Actually, Cal-fus (ph) invited us, our family, and there was a tremendous reunion. They took him and made him a part of the, you know, the interview. Anyhow, we are back in Chair-hon-off (ph) in 1939. After they took away from us all our freedom, they took away from us all our possessions. In the meantime, my grandmother died. That was before we went to the ghetto. My grandmother was no longer alive. And I was heartbroken because, except for my parents, I have never had as a close relationship with anyone as I had with my parents and with my grandmother. And she had such a great influence in this, I was heartbroken. But looking back, I am grateful that she did not have to go to what we went through and she died in her own bed and she was buried in Chair-hon-off (ph) and is there still. That was already, it was not as open, another kind of funeral that would be otherwise.

Q: I wanted to ask, in this period where the Synagogue was burned, you weren't allowed to go to school, there were all kinds of restrictions. Did you pray at home? Did you try to continue to . . .?

A: Yes, yes. I still said every, in fact, even today, so many years, I still have the _____, it's like in-bred in me. Because I said it every morning when I was a child. And then, it just . . .

Q: Were you able to try to observe holidays and things like that?

A: We couldn't observe holidays anymore because, first of all, Jews were not allowed often to pray or to go among the Synagogues. We couldn't make a traditional sha-but (ph), there was no food. We lived in constant fear. And I saw, for instance, I think that I mentioned it, the religious people suffered more because they couldn't often _____ and there was starvation. When you, we tried as much as we could. I still knew what day it is and we tried as much as we could to keep the sha-but (ph), but that was when we were still living in Chair-hon-off (ph). And I actually didn't say good-bye to any of my relatives. Only, from all the family, from all the members, the only person on my mother's side that I said good-bye was to my grandmother. Because my mother and I was at her bed side when she died. And she was clear, her mind was so clear. And I remember that I was terribly upset and my mother said something that also was to be a lesson. She said, "Yit-cola (ph), (she said that in Yiddish, of course, because as I said I spoke Yiddish), death teaches us not to take for granted life." And we still had, usually you know, according to tradition, the Jewish burial was very important. But later we couldn't have, people couldn't ultimately go and bury so we still, she was still buried in Chair-hon-off (ph).
Q: You were able to bury her properly?
A: We did, we were able to bury her properly but it was not like a big funeral that she would have had because the children from Warsaw, the children from _____ and all of them, they couldn't come. We just, our family, and the people who were involved. Because from everything, from birth to death, our lives was different than it is now, how it was during the Holocaust. Because, for instance, there was not funeral pyres. There was not, you didn't bury people the same way that is here. And everything was different, on the way the customs were done. Our whole lives changed. Before the Nazis came in, the longest that I ever didn't eat was from one meal to the other. And being that we have a kosher home and familiar, after meat, eating, you wait six hours. So the religion taught me a lot of discipline too. And later the people who kept kosher could not keep kosher, they didn't have food at all. They were starving. So then in the middle of the night . . .
Q: Did you break those rules? Did you eat whatever you could at that point?
A: At that point there was no meat. There was no meat and we tried as much to keep as we could. But eventually when the hunger tool over you no longer could do it anymore because I remember a young pupil once of a Rabbi, when I was in Chair-hon-off (ph). Somebody was sick so he said that you're allowed, you don't have to fast if you don't feel good because to preserve your health, that was the first obligation. So all the laws, all the rules that applied before into other times that no longer could be applied here. Because here was just one thing, survival.
Q: How long were you able to live in your own home?
A: This is where I'm coming to now. I remember exactly. It was in the middle of the night. October 15, 1941. We were asleep and we heard, they broke in, the middle of the night. "All you-den rouse." All Jews out. And at that point we only, we couldn't, you wake up and you are tired, oh, the first thing with my mother, grab what she was mostly interested of course, the family should get out alive. She took the candlesticks, books, her books. A few books and a couple of bundles because everybody was constantly having, like a few things, we didn't know from day to day. And we didn't know, where are they taking us? And when I was a child, we use to, I use to play a lot at, you know they have, _____ it was called, a river. I'm trying to, is this a river or a lake? Which is larger? A lake? A river. A lake is larger, I think, but this was a river. And in this river, we used to play as children, I use to go, and there were big trees. In fact, I remember a story when I talk about the river and, I don't know, should I tell it? Which is really, okay. But anyhow, since people in this river, people used to bathe and there was like a special, like a place where on sha-but (ph) we used to go, _____ they use to call it, you know, to go for a walk. And we would go to the

river. And had beautiful moments. And then was a big castle near the river, there was a castle. When I lived there, it was empty, nobody lived in there. But a beautiful castle. In fact, I was now in Poland, it's still there, the castle is still there. I have a photograph of it. So, in the middle of the night, "All you-den rouse." With dogs, rifles, and they chased us out and they took us to the castle near the river. Lee-din-ya (ph) was called the river. And from there they put us on trucks and they took us to the ghetto, Nove' Mesto, Poland.
Q: Now who was with you at this place? Your entire immediate family?
A: My parents, my little brother and my little sister. That was all. My Aunt and Uncle and their children, they were the only ones that I saw still in the beginning, but when they chased us out they were not with us. So like I said, the only person that I said good-bye was my grandmother. The rest of the family we didn't know because to the other cities we couldn't even go, but them we would see occasionally. But when they chased us out, not until after the war I found out that when they chased us out they didn't chase out the whole city, they just chased out part. I don't know whether it was the larger or the smaller but the rest they chased out later, so my Aunt must have been, and her family with them.
Q: Did you have any sense of why you were chosen to go at that point verses another family?
A: I didn't even know that we were, that somebody was left. Because they chased us out in the middle of the night. We didn't have a chance to talk to anybody. Not until after the war did I find this out.
Q: So they sent you to this other town?
A: They sent us to other town which was called Nove' Mesto, they changed the names, everything was changed. And Nove' Mesto, where previously lived one family, they put in six, seven and eight families. And the ghetto, you know, I don't have to explain to you what a ghetto is, we were isolated from the whole city. And it was so terribly crowded. And there, where we lived in was a family, the family which lived there was called Yat-rack (ph), and when we came there the facilities were not much better, like in ours. And so many families with little children, and everybody wanted to be able to go to the stove or use the facilities and everything. So, it was already horrible just being so crowded. And one time, my mother and father said to us, "Kindle-left (ph) children, get together the few belongings, we are leaving." And I thought to myself, are they loosing, have they lost their minds? Where are we leaving? It's a ghetto. We cannot go out. But we were, knew to respect our parents so we obeyed. And we went to a place where was before a storage for grains. And it was empty, it was a dirt floor and nothing there, just a small window and a door. And my parents went, there were many ruins and they got together some bricks and by themselves they built a little stove. But what they said is still clear and vivid in my mind. They said, "At least here we'll have, it's enough that the Nazis destroy us from the outside. Here at least we'll have a little bit more peace and we'll be together. But it won't be because the fighting, the screaming, the children crying. So we'll live there, right here, in this storage room." Exactly, and the conditions of the ghetto, I don't think I need to go in because its very clear at this point.
Q: Well how bad was it? I mean, there are many kinds of ghettos.
A: Okay. This ghetto, to my knowledge, was not like the Warsaw ghetto where there was physical resistance, of fighting. In fact, there was some ghetto, it was not as large a ghetto. What I remember is that we were constantly hungry. And my mother tried from the little meal that we had, she tried to make meals and many times what she did, she would take a little of hers, she would give to the smaller children because they couldn't endure so much. We wanted the parents, if the parents wanted to protect the children, she still was trying to read poetry and to sing songs, she still had the books, and she says, "We must, as long as we live, we must go on like a clock. We cannot stop.

We have to go on." And she tried to teach my little sister who didn't have a chance to go to school, so she tries to teach her at home, _____ and to write a little bit. And my brother never had a chance to become barmitzvah. I don't know the exact age of them but I know that before, that he was not yet barmitzvah. And barmitzvah was always a very, very important thing for a Jewish child. So we lived in constant, and there was a lot of sicknesses. Because the sanitary, there was no medication, there wasn't a sanitary. A lot of parents died. You saw little orphaned children in the street begging for food. It was just horrible. Why I don't go in so much detail from the ghetto, because remember like I said before, that each time we thought it's the worst, something worse came. So after Auschwitz, this was like paradise. And for the main reason, because I still had my family.
Q: Okay, but then let me ask you a few questions.
A: Okay.
Q: Because we know a lot more about some of the larger ghettos, but I don't know too much about this one. Was there an organization within it? Was there a yudden-rot (ph)? Where there Jewish policemen? Or did the Germans patrol the ghetto?
A: The Germans patrolled, I don't know why I don't have so much knowledge of how it was in the ghetto. Because I know one thing, that most of the time we stayed inside so much. I know there was a lot of sickness. I know that they tried to help, there were people who tried to help each other. But the problem is that everybody was starved. Everybody was hungry. You couldn't go, it's just that sometimes the parents like made sacrifices. They would give a little of their ration to a younger child and the starvation. The kids couldn't anymore go to school. But if they would discover that we teach the children, we could be shot. They didn't want us to be educated. They wanted to destroy everything else. So still, the parents tried to teach and there were groups and we tried, like there was a group and if somebody got sick they tried to help. But the exact conditions that I should remember so clearly, I don't remember. I didn't know, I was too young still to know everything.
Q: So you didn't know how it was organized or run?
A: No.
Q: Was there a soup kitchen? Do you remember that?
A: I don't. No, I don't.
Q: It's okay. If you don't mind, ask you a few questions.
A: No, no, you can ask me. But I don't know. I know that, yeah, there must have been a soup kitchen because I remember that we used to go to get some food, because we didn't have the food at home. We got rations. But I don't remember exactly how it was organized.
Q: Did people work in the ghetto? Did either of your parents, were they forced to work?
A: I don’t think too much, no.
Q: Okay. Did you play with other children?
A: Yes. In fact, there was one girl that I got to know in the ghetto. We stayed friends. So yes, I did have friends, tried to as much as we could to go on and to talk, but the conditions were so horrible. Because hunger and no place to wash, no place to, if somebody got sick there was no medication. So there was a lot of illnesses, like typhus was a lot, also, going in. Some people died of starvation. Some people died, that's what I remember most, is little kids crying a lot and begging. And older people sitting outside because there is already a lot of orphans.
Q: Were bodies buried when people died?
A: This I don't know.
Q: Did you, were you able to sort of, you were, was the ghetto fenced in? Were you able to go out of it?

A: Yes. Yes, it was fenced in.
Q: But you could wander freely on the streets in the ghetto?
A: In the ghetto, people tried not to wander around too much because they didn't want to, they wanted to avoid to be visible. Not to get hit because the Nazis had a tendency to torture, to mock us. In fact, for that reason, we tried as much to stay out of sight. I remember that I was mostly trying to be inside, like I felt safer to be inside.
Q: Did the Nazis come into the ghetto? Do you remember seeing people in uniform inside the ghetto?
A: Yes. But not constantly. I don't know why I have so little recollection of the ghetto. That is not too much, I was a whole year in the ghetto. It was exactly October 15, 1941. They chased us from home. And the ghetto, the entire ghetto was liquidated on November 17, 1942. About a year later. What I remember is that when, again in the middle of the night, I don't know why, but when we were chased off it was in the middle of the night. But this time we were told, they got us all together, and we were told that we're going to be resettled to a family camp where we are going to have better conditions. Where we are going to have food and medications and where the families are going to be together and work. And people were happy that we're going to have better medical conditions and better food. And then they took us all and they put us in the cattle cars. I still had . . .
Q: How did you get this information?
A: From the _____ because I went there too.
Q: No, how did you get the information that you were going to be moved supposedly to these family camps?
A: Because a Nazi say this.
Q: So they came and they told you that?
A: They told us that we are going to be resettled to a family camp and we are going to have better conditions. We're going to have medicine, because a lot of people died because they got sick, they didn't have any medication. And that we're going to have more food, that we're going to have good conditions. We're going to work but we're going to have good conditions. And it made sense because they want us well, that's what we thought. So they are going to feed us better, they are going to give us medication, and we didn't put any resistance because we didn't know. We believed it. I was brought up to trust people, to believe. You know, in my life, my family didn't ever betray me. Like I said, the only time I heard my mother lying is this, so I had no reason why not to believe.
Q: Let me ask you one question. Did your family talk about what was happening or you just got by day to day?
A: I didn’t hear much discussion, I don't know whether my parents wanted to shield us. Believe it or not, in the worst conditions, they were telling us stories, they were teaching us . . .
[end of side 1 of tape 2]
Q: So you and your family were put on cattle cars?
A: Yes.
Q: Tell me about the trip, the journey.
A: Oh that was a time I will never forget. They closed, they closed, we were put in the cattle cars, they pushed in, it was so tight that you hardly had place to sit down. There was nothing to sit on. And there was no place to relieve yourself. They locked us in with just a small window that you looked out, and they locked us, you know, hermetically sealed cattle trains. And when the journey

begun, there was so many people packed in this here, and we traveled with this here, the train, from November 17, 1942, when we arrived in Auschwitz was November 22, 1942. So five days, right?
Q: What was happening in the cars?
A: What was happening in the cars? It was hot. We were hungry. We were thirsty. People were crying. People were praying. People were screaming, going crazy. We had no choice, we had to relieve ourselves in front of other people. Starvation. Fear. Where are we going? How long are we going to go? Where they are taking us? They promised better conditions, when is it going to be? And I remember parents tried to comfort, when we arrive there things are going to get better. And in the meantime, people were fainting. People got sick. It was just a living Hell.
Q: As a young girl do you remember what was going on in your mind, what you were thinking about?
A: What was going on, I was clinging to my parents. And I was wondering, what's going to happen? And I was crying because I saw my little brother and sister so hungry and I had nothing to give them. The parents wanted to protect us, we want to protect the parents. And we saw older people, we were always told by my parents and my grandmother, may she rest in peace, that we always help those who are less fortunate but here we were all less fortunate. And the worst thing was that we couldn't help each other too much. We were all in the same condition. There was no relief, no relief. And just, I kept on thinking about, I wanted to turn my mind off so I was trying to think of stories but the hunger took over. We were sleepy, there was no place to lay down. It was the most horrible journey. It was a horrible journey. And then, after five days like this, the stench, the tiredness, you know? The Holocaust for me, it was not, _____
_____ was nothing to compare to what we suffered. But the worst suffering was that we, I saw the people I loved and I couldn't help them, and they couldn't help us. We lost control of our lives. And that was even before we came to Auschwitz. And when we arrived, this train stopped all of a sudden, the door flung open, people who looked very strange to us in striped gray and blue stripes, wearing, with hats, _____. And then the Gestapo came and said, "All rouse, schnell, schnell, schnell." Always schnell, always rouse. And they told us to leave everything, to leave our bundles there. We didn't have too much to begin with. And everything went so fast. And then the Gestapo were chasing us and I remember I saw a gate. It said All-might-muck-fry (ph). All-might-muck-fry (ph) means work makes you free. But as I found out later, the only dead was only when they liberate us. Only a few survived. When we came they started to make selections. And Mengelia, at that time I didn't know that this is Mengelia, some very well fed, good looking Nazis, with the Nazis uniforms, with the swastika, stood so, they were, you couldn't tell from their faces anything. Expression was like mocking and everything. And later I found out that the one who made the selection when we were there was Mengelia. And they started to separate male from females and make selection. To the right and to the left. I had no idea. And all of a sudden, when we came there facing the gate where it said All-might-muck-fry (ph), this is the gate. On the right-hand side, which would be the left, but on my side facing, was a Red Cross truck with a sign, Red Cross. And I remember I pointed it out to my parents. I said, "See, they kept their promise. The Red Cross stands for help." And then they said, they started to tear apart the families. Separate the families. Pulled out children from the hands of their parents. Little infants away from the mother. And they started to make the selection. To the left and to the right. Immediately they took away my father. My father was a young man, maybe early 40's or 40 or so. And they took away my little brother and sister. My mother and I they put together in the line, we were selected to go each. And at that point . . .
Q: How old were your brother and sister at that time?

A: I don't know their exact age, they were younger than I but I just go by because I know that my little sister, when the Nazis came in she hadn't start yet school. And my brother wasn't yet barmitzvah, so I don't know their exact age. It was, at home we didn't celebrate birthdays like here because for the Jewish people didn't, some people didn't want to say their age because they believe in the evil eye and things like this. I don't know, superstitious. But anyhow, they were still young. So when they took them away, my mother was with me, and everything went so fast that I didn't even have time to think. And then my mother turned to me and she said, "Yit-cola (ph), you're a big girl. I have to go with the little children. But remember my child, no matter what's going to happen to you, don't become hateful and bitter. Don't let them destroy you." That was her last words. And all of a sudden I was all alone. And that's it, everything that I had, everything, because I was became dead. And I didn't even have a chance to say good-bye because I didn't know that we are parting forever. I didn't know about gas chambers, nothing. My personal experience, nothing can historically, I never knew about gas chambers. When you saw that we were deceived. Deceived, we didn't know. So then they lined us up and we were taken into the, a different way. And they left for the barracks. And they took them away. I didn't know at that time where, I had no idea. Now when I know what's happened, but I mean, at the time when they took us away we didn't know. And they took away all older people, young children, pregnant woman. So I talk to myself, I remember it today, look how kind they are because we were told that we were all going to be together. So we thought that they give them a ride, which I appreciated very much. I figured the little children, but I had no idea that we are parted forever. Who could know that doctors who were trained to say the Hippocratic oath, that are trained to heal the sick are going to kill their health. In fact, I wrote a poem about Mengelia. Would you like me to say it?
Q: I think I'd like you to continue now and then we'll see if you feel like reading it later.
A: Yes. Anyhow, when they took us away all of a sudden they brought us into a place and we were, they shaved, first of all they made their number. We had to give up everything. I remember I was clutching a little picture, a photograph of my family, and I had to give it up. At first I didn't want to so they started to beat me so I figured its not worth it to, you know? I knew that I'm not going to be able to keep it so I gave it up. And we had to . . .
Q: What is your number?
A: My number?
Q: They gave you a number?
A: Yes. 2-5-6-7-3. Not everyone got numbers. The ones who they took away to the gas chambers, they didn't get numbers. And also, I don't know whether you are aware, Auschwitz was Auschwitz I, II. I was taken to Birkenau and Birkenau was where the gas chambers were, all the gas chambers.
Q: Were your brother and sister still with you at this point?
A: When they took away . . .
Q: When they took you into the shaved and tattooing . . .
A: Oh, no, no, no. They immediately had the selections. Mangelia sent them to the trucks. And I remember they were holding hands, you know, my little brother and sister. My brother was protecting my little sister, they took them away. And then my mother saw them going away. I don't know how much she know, what she knew, but again her _____, she made a fatal choice and she went with the children. She said she cannot leave them alone, you are a big girl. So that was the last time I ever saw them. The whole family for four generations. And I had no idea where my Aunt, who lived in Warsaw, she was married with children, my Aunt in the _____. Another _____, all the relatives. I never said good-bye, I don't know what's happened to them. Whether my Aunt in Warsaw died in the Warsaw ghetto, whether she was, this we will never know.

We don't even have, you understand why this story of Buncho (ph) the Silent, I was thinking. Because, I don't know whether it was just coincidental that this story had such an effect on me and why I remembered because Buncho (ph) the Silent in the story was 13 years old, when the step-mother came. And also I was many times thinking that we live for so long, since about the 1600 century my ancestors came to Poland. And yet, we had to leave everything. Everything that was ours they inherited, they took away everything. Nothing was ours. And, you know? And then when we came there, they shaved our heads, everybody had shaved heads. The guys, it was done too. And then we were the fortunate ones, at that time we didn't know because good and bad fortune can only be understood in retrospect. So I didn't realize that I was still lucky, that I got the number. At least I'm alive with the number. And then we really got a bath, we didn't get gassed, but obviously, or I wouldn't be here to tell you this. But we got a bath, which we welcomed because a shower was, you know? And then we went out for, a whole full of the floor was laying uniforms. And they were striped, the same thing as we saw with the ones who came to the train. And, not from the Nazis, this was also hefflinger (ph), which means Jewish people who were interred there. And then they gave us those uniforms and they took away our shoes. Everything was taken. Our clothes, our shoes, our hair, our name. Everything. And all of a sudden, I realized that to them I was just a number. And I remember that at the time, when they called, you know they never called us by name but number, in order to dehumanize us, that we should give in and give up. They always would call my number, which was 2-5-6-7-3 [in German], and whenever they say that I always would say under my breath, "Yit-cola (ph)". Because I thought to myself, how can I be a number? I can feel, I can think, I can laugh. Of course I didn't have freedom but I had freedom of mind, freedom of thoughts. And so I, this was my spiritual form of resistance. That I refused to see myself through their minds. And after they gave us the, instead of my shoes, which was a nice pair of shoes too, they gave us wooden clogs. And mine, unfortunately, were not matching. And we got an enamel bowl. And this was all our worldly possessions. In one day our entire past was wiped out. And we had no future. We didn't know it then yet. I didn't know about gas chambers yet. And they marched us into a barrack.

Q: Let me ask you one question here. Was there anyone in this group you knew from before? Did you know some people from your town?

A: Sure. We came with people from our town who were in the ghetto.

Q: Did any of the older people try to protect you because your mother wasn't with you?

A: The older people didn't come in with me.

Q: Well, older meaning three years older, or?

A: In the ghetto, I mean, in the concentration camp there was pretty much solidarity. However, I had one bad experience. And I'll come to it. So when they gave us, and we always had to march to line up, never, since I came in on November 22, 1942, until Auschwitz was resolved, until January 18, 1945, I had no longer freedom. No freedom. We were, everything, because from the morning we woke up, we came _____ in the barrack, it was a real big, long barracks. And was three layer bunk beds. And crowded on the bunk beds with one blanket. And they were so low that you couldn't sit up. We couldn't sit up. The same clothes, the shift that we got, with this I slept. There was no night clothes. From 1942 to 1945 I never brushed my teeth. I never saw myself in a mirror. Nobody ever embraced me. Nobody ever said, after having so much love. So when I'm looking back from an environment where I was free like a bird, to come to a place where I felt like in a cage. And you know, you can put a bird in a cage but you cannot deprive them of their desire to fly. They took away my freedom but they couldn't take away my desire to be free. They took away my loved ones but they could not take away my desire to live. And I guess there were many horrible things

but probably the most horrible was losing everyone I loved. And not only experiencing my own suffering, but witnessing the suffering of others and have to be silent like Buncho (ph) the Silent. And I couldn't say anything. And in the barracks, where I could say something when the Nazis were not there at night, it was like the Tower of Babel. Because everyone spoke a different language. And we were too tired, too grieved in the beginning. So when we came in, so many people were crowded in this barrack. And all of a sudden, from a happy sheltered loving home to be thrown into an environment like this. And everybody was suffering. My first concern was, when is our family going to come? But I still was naive enough to believe what the Nazis told us, that we are going to get united. So I'm waiting. And I don't see them. So I start asking questions. And there is a conspiracy almost like, so silent. Whether they didn't want to tell us because they didn't want to break my heart, or whether they were not allowed to? This I don't know, but whoever I asked nobody answered anything. They didn't say yes or no, nothing. Finally, after constantly badgering and repeating, one of the girls said, "You might as well tell her. We are all here condemned to die." And she points at the smoke and she said, "You see that chimney? This is where your parents are." And tells me the story about the gas chambers. She said, "This is where we're all going to be." Remember I related a story, it was when I was a child, I went to the funeral, my parents took me to the funeral and they told me that, to take your own life is a sin. It's like spitting God and your parents in their face because they gave you a gift and its against the Jewish law. So I did not for once think about committing suicide. But at that moment, if I would have been able to die when I found this out, that's how horrible my grief was. And I just was ready to give up. I was not trying to think about committing suicide, but I became oblivious. I didn't care what's happening. And anyhow . . .

Q: Can I ask you a question here?

A: Yes.

Q: How long do you think you were there before you realized this? Or before you were told this?

A: I didn't know the first day.

Q: Was it a few months?

A: No, no, not months. It was in a few days. The exact day I don't know. Not very long, not very long. Because I was constantly asking and badgering the girls. And I'm going to go in later to describe what a day in Auschwitz was, but for now, they gave us the ration bread and I felt like, its like a funeral for me. I lost everybody. So I didn't, couldn't, I was starved but I couldn't eat. So I took the bread and left it. In the morning my bread was gone. And one of the girls there, I don't remember her last name any longer, Esther I know was her first name, she was from Chair-ta-hoff (ph) and she actually came from a prison. I don't know whether the prison was during the war because from what I know she was not a criminal, so maybe she, the Nazi laws were different than our laws. For keeping _____ on, for wanting to practice our religion, for wanting to live. To kill you was legal. But to save a Jewish child or a Jewish adult was illegal and punishable by death. To survive was to them, everything that was our they have taken away, if we would try to keep something, we were treated like criminals. So anyhow, in the morning Esther says to me, "Oh poo Yit-ka (ph), somebody stole your bread." And I said, "My gosh, what place is this? Stealing somebody's piece of bread." And when I got the next day my bread, I couldn't eat again. Even though I was, like my throat was locked. And I left the bread. In the night for some reason we slept so many people on one bunk, so if one had to turn, so we slept on our sides like sardines, the other, we had to wake the others, so somebody woke up. And as I wake up, the girl, Esther, who pitied me was eating my bread. And that was almost like the last straw for me. And at that point I just didn't care what's happening. And I was sitting and crying. And I didn't know it at the time, in Auschwitz

if you didn't get up for the _____ or the counting, if you didn't obey the law for anything, you would right away be killed, taken to the gas chambers. So a girl walks over and she ask me, "Why are you crying?" And I didn't care at all, I was so, so heartbroken, that I just started crying. I just didn't even want to answer. Finally she, it was something in her voice, that I felt that like she's caring, which I started to understand and I remembered what my grandmother use to say, "Yes my child, but kindness and caring cannot be little things." Like when I did the _____. And what's happened? And finally I tell her. And she said, she thought that I cried because of the bread, I cried of the whole situation, of losing the family and everything. So she took a piece of her bread and she broke it off and she said, "Take it." And I didn't want to take it. Because I already knew that we are all there to be killed, that it's just a matter of time. So I figured I cannot afford to get involved with anybody, to care for someone, to have a relationship, because in case one of us goes, there's going to be additional pain, to protect myself from the pain. But there was something in her voice and her face and everything. Her name is Benack (ph), at the time, was Binna Gold-cut (ph), Yanka Gold-cut (ph), because she use to call herself Yanka. And finally I took the bread and I said, "No, I cannot alone, no matter how long I'm going to live, alone. It's not even worth living. I'm all alone." I took the bread and Binna became my dearest friend. And from that day on, she became like my sister. We cared for each other. We cared deeply for each other and we helped each other. In Auschwitz, a piece of bread meant life. Meant winning in the game of survival. So I just felt that she was so kind, that she was able to break up, and the contrast. Here, Esther stole my piece of bread. And this girl gave away a piece of bread. I didn't even know until this day, I don't know when she came, I didn't know at that time anything. Now I know that she was born in Warsaw, but I didn't know. At that time we didn't think of it. And I took the bread and with it something in my spirit started to soar again and we made a commitment, Binna and I. We didn't know if we were going to get out of there, but to live or to die with _____, with humanness. Not to lose our dignity. And this is important to know, that in Auschwitz there were two kinds of laws. If somebody was hungry and while they were carrying the cauldron with soup, people would lift up the lid and put in their bowl and grab and run. If they were lucky they could run away. If they caught them, they would get 25 on their bare behind. And sometimes even worse. But one inmate from the other, that was a no law. Would not take, because we know this meant survival. And from 1942 to 1945 I was in Auschwitz, nobody ever stole from me anything. You know? And we felt like we had no freedom at all. No freedom of movement, only in our soul and our mind could we be free. And just to feel that I had some kind of choices yet to make. We use to switch, you know, like to share. I would give Binna a little bit of my soup and she would give me a piece of bread, or vis-a-versa. One day when she had the _____. And even sisters and mothers, sometimes, if they were lucky to be together, they kept separate the plate, everybody would, they would measure when they divided. You shouldn't be a hair bigger than the other because the starvation was so great. Binna and I trusted each other and we kept together our bread. We didn't keep it separate and she never betrayed me, or vice-a-versa. And somehow knowing, she became the, next to my family, she became the friend that I kept with. When other friends in concentration, but Binna and I were more like friends, under such circumstances. And when the day that they usually begun, when the whistle would blow, get up. And we would always, it was still dark. I didn't have a clock because as I said, my only worldly possession was the shift, the wooden clog and the bowl. Nothing else. So I didn't have a watch, I didn't know what day it is, I didn't have a calendar. We didn't have anything. People say, did you have this? So that's why I'm pointing out, I didn't have more than this . . .

End of Tape 2.

Tape 3

Q: You were beginning to tell me what an average day or a typical day in Auschwitz was like for you.

A: We didn't wake up by the clock. We woke up, until this day I don't know what time, I know it was still dark. We would wake up and didn't have to dress because I slept in the shift, the same shift that we wore during the day. We didn't have any extra clothes. This was all that we had. And there was water but we were told that this is not good drinking water. So water was very scarce. We didn't have, we couldn't go to the bathroom when we wanted. It was like a collective bathroom, like the latrines you know? And it was just a wooden board and in it like cut out a piece. So we couldn't go where we wanted and this was a terrible thing because certain people, sometimes out of, there was such a terrible thirst or a hunger, that sometimes they would eat things that they shouldn't eat, or drink. And therefore they got diarrhea. And because the conditions, we couldn't wash up. We didn't have anywhere to wash. So it wasn't clean. And once you got the diarrhea, that was the end of you, because when you have diarrhea you have to run a lot and they wouldn't let you go and work. And if you soiled yourself, then when they made the selections, then you would go now. So it was important. And in order to feel a sense of freedom, since we couldn't wash, I could go through the movements of pretending that I'm washing myself, just to have some, to feel some freedom. So when I got up in the morning, it was dark and in the summer it was hot, winter was cold, and out of habit I was still saying the _____, I would still say the prayers, even in Auschwitz. And we would start, go to the _____ where we are counted. Alive or dead, we had to be _____. And they used the matter that one was responsible for all. So if one person would not be found because he's sick or wouldn't come out, or whatever, we all had to stand no matter how long. Rain, in the biggest rain and the frost without a coat, without anything. If we didn't have, and we would stay, freeze. So we used to try to warm each other, one in the back, you know somebody would stand, you stay in the front and somebody in the back and embrace each other. And one day we couldn't do it ultimately because the Nazis, they counted. And sometimes we would be lucky, that everybody was accounted for. Other times we would stay for hours. And then they would give us something, even though we didn't have enough of it and we wish we would have had more, but its suppose to be coffee, it resembled muddy water. A little beet. A piece of bread. Some kind of smelly cheese, its like Limburger cheese, it was smelly. But we didn't get enough of it. We were grateful that we had this here because we were so hungry that we would eat anything almost. In fact we had to restrain ourselves, sometimes not to eat things which could harm us. And in the winter, because there was lack of water and no place to wash, we would pick up the snow. And if a Nazi would see us or the one who was watching us, we would get beaten for that. They tried to torture us. And then after we got our ration, we had to line up, and I can still hear, "Links." Line up and go march. And on both sides big, long lines with the prisoners marching, with the inmates marching. And I don't know how to call ourselves because when they talk about slavery in Egypt or _____ was not as bad as what we had, yet they don't call them slaves. So prisoners, I don't know what, but I feel we were worse than slaves because slaves are not condemned to die, you know? Not that way, they used them for something. And we started to walk and on both sides were guards and the Nazis with the dogs, that went with us to work. And then we had to go through the gates, and at the gates many times was a dren-dall (ph), they would take out somebody who didn't walk too good or didn't look to good. Other times we were just called, 1-2-3, 5-6-7, the 8th out, sometimes the 10th out, we never know. So you could not plan from one second to the other because you don't know whether you come back, would you be alive the next day. That's when I realized how a person was condemned to death, you know, who has a family illness

must feel. And I found out pretty soon that it was more dangerous to walk on the outside line so we tried to be in the inside line and not to be the very first or the very last. The less visible you could make yourself. And we marched. When I came I was assigned to Block 8 and a Turkish woman was our Block Elster (ph). A Block Elster (ph) had a little more privileges than the others, she didn't have to go out to work but she was responsible. And then we went out to work and I cannot estimate how long of time or how many miles because I had no way of measuring, but I know we worked snow, winter, sunshine, it didn't matter. And then we came to work. And we always worked outside the camp. And, outer-commando (ph) it was called, when you worked outside, outer-commando (ph). And what I started to realize is that the work we were doing at that time was not usual work. We would take stones or gravel and carry it from place to place and the Nazis used to mock us. And point to the gas chambers and _____ they said, "See? That's where you're all going to come out." And then he said, "Where is your God now?" And that's when I remembered what my mother told me, when I had to go to the root cellar. "Go, Yit-cola (ph), go. God is in the root cellar too." And I said to myself, "Go, Yit-cola (ph), go. You're the last one of your family. If you don't survive, the world will not know and it will be the last. It's like your family will not have existed. Go. God is here too. But man is not here. _____ [humanness] is not here." And I started to understand what _____ means, why my parents stressed it so much. And I never for once felt like God has failed me. I felt the people failed me. Because God gives men choices to do good or evil. But they have chosen and they were the educated people. My family always stressed education. _____ . In fact, my family used to say that _____ is the highest form of religion, science and achievement. And in Auschwitz, I had a chance to find out that this was true. Because Mengelia has doctoral degrees. And he's responsible for the death of 400,000 people including my own family. So I did not doubt God. In spite of what was happening, that I still pray to God and I still believed in God and I remembered other things, which I didn't mentioned this story and I think I will now because I thought of that story often. You know, for Passover and Rash-sha-shona (ph) every year, regardless of how poor you were, or rich, people would get new clothes. It didn't matter whether you had a lot. And most, and there was not big department stores like this here, so mostly we would go to the dressmaker to make a dress. That particular summer, I was like in my pre-teens, and I remember my mother ordered for me navy blue _____. And the dressmaker made me a dress, a two-piece dress, a sailor dress, a pleated skirt with the collar like this. And when we went to try on first the measurements and everything. And then when the dress was ready I would try it on again and look in the mirror and it fit well. And I felt so proud, so happy with this dress. The sailor dress. And I came home and it was early Passover, before Passover. So, like a child, I wanted to put on the dress and to show my girlfriends what a pretty dress, I was so proud of it. And when I was going to put on the dress, my mother said to me, "Yit-cola (ph), please don't put on the dress now." I said, "Oh Mom, it's gonna . . ." She said, "It might get tore and it might get stains and then you won't have it for Passover." And I said, "Oh Mom, its going to be okay." So I remember my mother said to me, "Yit-cola (ph), please. Don't take chances on something you can't afford to lose." But as a child I started to nudge, oh please and please and please. So finally my mother said, she says, "Well, you learn about responsibility. That's the only way you're going to learn." And I promised I won't, I'll be careful. And I had every intentions of doing it, it was not out of mischief or not caring. And I put on the dress and I came out. And I was very, a combination. In one way I could be very serious and I was very playful and a little tomboy and I remember I mentioned to you that we had the _____, the river. And we use to go there, it had beautiful trees. And the kids came and somebody challenged, they said, "Who can climb up highest on the tree?" And I was

pretty good at that, you know? I was never heavy, which actually in Poland that was not looked at favorably. They use to say that she has consumption if you were thin. People were more, so anyhow, in no time I climbed up this tree, the tree, and I was, I dissed the person who was challenging me. And all of a sudden I hear somebody say, "Yit-cola (ph), Yit-cola (ph) your mother is coming." And I got scared and I remembered, my gosh, I'm wearing the good dress. And I went to get off the tree fast and the skirt, the pleated skirt got caught in a branch and I tore the skirt. I came down. My mother wasn't even there, it was just a prank they played on me. And I was in tears. And I said, "My God. My mother begged me not to take chances. Not to take a chance to lose something and now my dress is torn." And I remember like today, I took the pleats and I folded it over so it wouldn't show my flesh, because it was a big tear. And when I came into the house with tears in my eyes, my mother looked at me, she didn't have to ask much. All she said, "Take of the skirt." Because she saw the way I held it with tears in my eyes, so she put two and two together. "And I'll fix it for you." But she said, "Remember one thing. It's up to you. You can wear your old dress or the dress that I'll fix for you. But you're going to go to services." I was crying my eyes out because I didn't want to wear my old dress and I didn't want everybody to see that, what I did with this dress. But I remembered the lesson. Because my father always pointed out, in everything there is a lesson. In every experience. And what I remembered from that lesson is not to take chances with something I cannot afford to lose. And this was for me a terrific lesson because I knew one thing I cannot afford in Auschwitz, is to lose my life. So what I tried to do, many think rather than to take chances like grabbing a little soup, you know, although I was starved, I said no. I don't want to take chances because if they catch me they can kill me or beat me up so badly and if I cannot work they'll take me away. And I started to realize there how important it is, the upbringing, the influences that I had and the lessons I had. And mostly I saw, you see before the Holocaust I had no frame of reference with which to compare the things, the values, and the things or the blessings that I had. And then I had a chance to see what it is to be without a family, without a Jewish community, without the _____, we were always Jewish there, but we were not, Jewish people were not the only people who were in Auschwitz. There were Gypsies, there were Jehovah Witness, there were the Polish people, they were from all countries. However, the Jewish, we, the Jewish girls, we were not together with the men in the same camp. The Polish girls were not together in the same barracks with us. We were separated. So in all the years that I was there, I never had any contact with a man. I'm not talking in a sexual way, but I mean even to be friends or to be in the company of men. And here, this is my teen-age years. The price of going to _____, the price of higher education that I was dreaming, to get a good, formal education. The price of all the things, of liberty, which I started to realize how important freedom is. Our liberty. And this is when, when I felt all this here, then I felt, oh I wish I had a pencil and paper so I could write down how I feel. But I didn't have. And at that time, I wrote in my head to past time, to forget, to run away from the harsh reality. So I remembered that I wrote a poem in my mind and it was what I felt and it was, I feel like a bird with clipped wings, tied to this earth by invisible strings, chained to a destiny I did not chose, I feel like a prisoner that cannot break loose, I look at the sky with a heavy sigh, but my wings have been clipped and I no longer can fly. And I was looking out and seeing the physical surroundings. Around us was the barbed wires, the watch towers, the crematories. The smoke constantly above our heads and beneath us was mud. There was so much mud there that when we wore those wooden clogs, sometimes they got stuck in the mud and the feet got wet and on cold, winter days they, for a long time you couldn't even take them off, if the feet got frozen, the _____ bite, frost bite, and then after a day like this of suffering and on the job they would mock us, they would beat us. We could not, we were not allowed to help each other. And the useless

words. And I was thinking to myself, my gosh, if this is, if this is our _____, I don't even have the word to express it, its like a different planet. It's in the same world like a different planet, a planet of destruction, of death. The dead were not buried and was mountains, everything was mountains. Mountains of dead bodies until they buried them. And constant living under the fear of maybe today they are going to take you away, and if you got sick you had no luck, there was no medication. Everything that they promised was not. And once I found out what they do with the people who come, that they take away, and I heard music playing. And I asked somebody, "Where is the music?" And that's when I found out that they have a live orchestra playing. When the transport was coming and they made selections, sending away people to the gas chamber, the music was playing. Classical music. And later, when I heard the music, I always started to cry because I knew that my people are burning, the music is playing. And you know, even after the Holocaust I always loved music and singing, but for a long time whenever I start to hear music, I started to cry because the visions of the little children, of everything separated and how they tore apart. And then, after a long day, again, walking through the gate, the selections. Some people got beaten to death. Other people from working were injured, some people got sick. And every day there became lesser and lesser of us. And the bodies, more skeletal. And we didn't, couldn't take a shower or anything and we started to accumulate lice. So a big treat was when we could take off that dress and try to _____ to expose of the lice. And people with diarrhea, and it was just Dante's Inferno is a comedy comparing to what it was. That's what I say because you ask me, did I, it's impossible to describe everything. So we came back tired, frozen, cold, over heated from the heat in the whole day, we came back, again the appeal (ph), say appeal (ph) and check there, there to alive, we are there. And then we had to wait, after they count again they give us a little soup, a little bread. It wasn't enough to live and not enough to die. And many people, many, constantly people died. And seeing, here you was with somebody, a few minutes later they were gone. And constantly new transports, and you couldn't speak. So, and the filth, the starvation, the loneliness. Like I started before to tell you, is all this time not seeing yourself in a mirror, not having a toothbrush. They tried to dehumanize us to the point where we didn't even, I'm embarrassed to talk about it, but when I remember what my parents taught me, that my _____ does not depend on how other treat me but how I treat others, than I'm not ashamed because I haven't done anything to deserve it. We didn't even have a piece of toilet tissue. All the time I was in Auschwitz, I couldn't have a piece of toilet tissue. This is how they deprived us. Not a spoon, not a fork, nothing. You know, they tried to reduce us to be like non-humans. And the mocking constantly and everything. So again, each day the same thing, over and over, starting the _____ and just hanging on another day. Just if you could get through the day, not get beaten, not go to the gas chamber, go through the day and come home together with Binna, that's _____. And many times, people would go in the evening and somebody would say, "Listen, I'm going to give you a little of my soup. You want to give me a piece of your bread?" Some people preferred the, a little soup to the bread. And the starvation. And then the Nazis would come and they would say that they are going to give us extra bread, who wants to have extra bread? And I learned very quickly, whenever they called for volunteers for something, I never wanted to volunteer. I felt, others suffered but I don't want to get involved to do something which wouldn't be _____, you know? And what I found out one time, they took, they made a selection. They gave, it was true, they did give this time a little more bread, but they took away the girls and not until after the war, one who was taken away and survived, I found out that they took them for experiments. And they, the doctors experimented without anesthesia. You know, they castrated some men and some women, the operations, so they could never bear children anymore. And some people, one woman, she is already dead now, but a few years ago she was still

alive, I don't know what they did to her but hair was growing on her face so she had to go Electro-something, I forget how this is called, they had to take it off from her face. Hair grew like a man, you know? And different things. There were plenty, I know certain people who I personally know who got married but never could have children because of those experiments. And some got sick. But the majority died, they didn't survive this here. Yes, and another thing. There was a _____, you know? So, and they sometimes Mengelia or other doctors would come and we had to strip and, which is _____. He would look us over and those who looked already skinny or they are too sick or, away to, but at that point, away to the gas chambers. There was a block where they would send away, and sometimes they didn't have enough time to get them out, so they would put them, put them in this block and they no longer gave them food or anything. And then they take them away. If you got sick, it was tough luck. Then you were a goner. Until this day, I cannot, I'm thinking and I'm amazed myself that I didn't, wasn't able to be clean there. I didn't have medications, a few times I got sick. Not like real serious. Without an aspirin, without medication, everything else. And yet to survive. And then constantly transports. And then was one day, we were called _____, they asked us to stay longer and there was a girl and her name was _____, something with a "Z" begins, I forget her last name, Zit-a-emir (ph), something like this here. I didn't know her personally but I knew of her. She was a messenger, you know? And I don't know the exact story because I don't, I'm not, I was not a witness when she run away, I didn't see her run away. But I know that one day we were all called together and we were, they prepared a gallow and they were going to hang her because she run away and they brought her back, they found her. And she, when they found her, I don't know from where because in Auschwitz I couldn't get anything more than what I got, the bowl and the clothes. She had a razor someplace hidden. And before they hang her, she cut her wrists in my prescence. Then there was another hanging. This hanging I did not witness because Rosa Loberta (ph), my _____, the beautiful Rosa, this story I just know from my _____, the few to have survived. That she was also hanged in Auschwitz because she wasn't dead and they destroyed one of the crematoriums. And when the Nazis started to lose the war, of course I didn't know about it because we had no outside communication. Completely cut off. That's why I say, its in this world but a planet like a different world because we were isolated completely. They started to speed up the gassing and they wanted to destroy everybody because even though he is losing the war but he still was carrying on with the plan of destroying the Jewish people. So the girls made to destroy the gas chambers. And anyhow, there is somebody who's name is Noy-ia Zub-o-dal-vich (ph), he lives in Israel. And he was able, because they kept him in solitary, and they tortured her. And from him I know this story. That they hang her. And before they hand her, she said, "Ha-zak viv-lots (ph)", the strong and brave. And what they wanted from her is that she should denounce, they interrogated her too and they wanted her that she should tell who the others were. The resistance, you know, she was involved with other people. She, from the story that I've heard, that she was smuggling pieces of ammunition or something, but as I said, I'm not a witness to that but I heard. So there was resistance but very, not speaking for the Warsaw ghetto we know that resistance, but this I'm not going to speak because I wasn't in those ghettos, I wasn't there. But the very fact, to want it to go on knowing that nobody is left anymore. There is no place to go back or anything. So surviving, and we didn't know how others, what's going on, what are they doing with the war or anything. But I kept constantly asking myself, the German people at that time were the most educated people and yet they did the most horrible things. A doctor who takes the Hippocratic oath to heal sick people is murdering healthy? And everything, it seemed to me like ironical. The youngster he considered too young to live and the old were too old to live and the teen-agers, from teen-age years to older a little bit, they were just

right to go to Hell and live and to suffer and to die there. So it was extremely, constantly living with pain to see that everyday there is less and less. And there was the son-day-commander (ph). And the son-day-commander (ph) was a group of Jewish prisoners in Auschwitz who were operating the involvement with gassing the people. And I didn't know it then but now, afterwards I found out, and almost I was in there. I returned to Poland and I went to the gas chambers now because I never saw a gas chamber inside. And what I, so we saw, I have photographs and I saw it by myself. The process that they had, that to tell the people that they are going to take a bath but instead to put on gas, this was out completely of my experience both historically and privately. I never heard this. And not only that, everything that they took away that was ours became theirs . . .[end of side 1 of tape 3]... You know, all the values, all the many beliefs that I've been taught and many things, I had to tell them everything. It was not just the physically, but to tell them because I started to ask questions of myself. I said, what is education for if it leads to Auschwitz, to gas chambers? Imagine. Not only did they took away our possessions, our homes, our traditions and everything, but a lot in Poland, gold teeth was our status symbol. Plus people did it to fix their teeth, but those who were wealthier used to make the crowns for the teeth, they put in gold teeth. So when the people were dead, before they went in they cut their hair and this was used for German economy, it was for mattress stuffing and everything. And I was thinking, we had straw mattresses. My parents didn't go to college, and my grandmother. But how did they live? I started to compare the values. And then, is another thing, from the teeth they took away everything and they selected, the glasses, and every single thing they took away from every part of the body. From the skin, lamp shades and everything. So everything was, again, what is technology for? And this is why, when I got out, I could no longer have the same values. I had to tear down everything and to compare. What did my parents teach me? What did my grandmother teach me? What does my religion teach me? That the most important thing was a human life, to save one life, the Talmud teaches us, is like to save the whole world. And here was my mother who didn't have college degrees, was a extremely intelligent woman, well-red and intelligent and very artistic, but she didn't have college degree. And yet she resisted. She resisted both physically and spiritually. She did not give up Cal-fus (ph). And from one person that is now several generations of people. Can you imagine how many generations would be if they wouldn't have killed the six million? How many people? And one Mengelia could do so much damage. And that's when I started to realize, by going back. Not everything that I reflect while being there. Many things I reflected upon until this day. And I started to say, so I realized something very important. That four groups of people actually influenced my destiny. Because the Nazis, the only reason why the Nazis did this to us is because we were born Jewish. I did not choose my parents and my parents didn't choose to die in the gas chambers, to be murdered. They didn't die. They didn't die. They were murdered. Those who starved of starvation, those who were killed or those from diseases, they were murdered because they put us in those conditions. And everything that was ours became their by brute force, by terror and by deception. And this is why I start about honesty. And then I started to realize, when I look back now, I realized also that there are some things you cannot buy without money but there are also some things we cannot buy for money. And those are the things that I miss the most. No money in the world can replace the six million Jewish people and five million non-Jewish people who were murdered by the Nazis.

Q: I want to ask you some specific questions about Auschwitz. You've told me quite a bit but I'd like to learn a little bit more about who the guards were? How they treated you? Who were the people you lived with? Where were they from and did that keep changing?

A: Well in Auschwitz everything kept changing constantly. Because people were dying very fast, okay? And people were coming constantly. So the turnover was very quick. People came. The

people in Auschwitz, we were in the same barrack but as I told you, we could not speak each other's language. Some could. The people who spoke Yiddish came very handy for me. Because in Europe not everybody, but those who came from religious homes, they could speak Yiddish. So it, as far as the guard, the people in the barracks I couldn't speak with everybody, nor did I have the energy, nor was there enough time. We came home, we were dead tired. And once we gave us the piece of bread we were lucky that we could lay down our heads because before we knew it, it was morning again.
Q: How many people slept on your bed with you?
A: I think it was like about six people or something like this here.
Q: In that one-third of the bunk?
A: Yes. And the bunks were so low you couldn't sit up. You couldn't sit up. And sometimes it happened that somebody died in the middle of the night. Couldn't do anything about it. The corpse.
Q: Were you aware, I mean at certain periods because you were there a long time, you were there two years?
A: I was from 1942 to 1945.
Q: Yeah, the end of 1942?
A: In November.
Q: Yes. Were you aware of periods when there were less people there or all of a sudden there was a huge new transport coming in?
A: Towards the end when they started to lose the war, there was more transport. They were bringing more people. It's like, it seemed to me from looking back now, that Hitler was determined to destroy everybody. He was also determined that there shouldn't be any traces. And another thing, which, see somebody would run away. Everything is relevant to conditions I've learned. For instance, if one girl would run away, there were a lot of obstacles. The first obstacle was that if one would run away the others would stay in _____ until they found _____ of that, we all would be punished. So those who had a conscious and who cared said, how can I save my life at the expense of others? Secondly, they evacuated, Auschwitz was called before Oswiecim, it was a town. In fact there is a survivor who is from Oswiecim. That was her hometown. So it was a town like any other towns in Poland. So they cleared, they evacuated all the people from there because they didn't want to have witnesses. Plus for miles and miles away there were no people so you couldn't hide. And Auschwitz, Birkenau was the only concentration camp to my knowledge, but I don't know everything, so as far as I know until this day Birkenau was the only concentration camp where they made, they put on numbers. So you had the numbers. Your head was shaved. You had no, you were wearing the clothes. And the same number that you had on the arm was also put on the dress, shift. Where could you go? And there was barbed wires, guards, watch towers. So it's one of the two, she would want to go to the barbed wires because, so two things happened. Either you get electrocuted or you get shot from the guards. So it was impossible almost to run away from Auschwitz.
Q: Did people try?
A: Not too many tried for the reason that I told you, because there was no place to go. Who would take you in? Where would you go? So not too many people. Some people might have jumped the train, but I don't know of any.
Q: Were there many suicides?
A: Relatively very few. That I am surprised. Very few. For me, its like, when I told you, at the point when Binna and I decided to accept it, I accepted her piece of bread but I also accepted what she offered more, her friendship. At that point, I made a decision. I will, first of all, of my

upbringing, I told you what my, this here had a very great influence. Plus I said, I will not collaborate in my own destruction. I did everything to try to keep myself clean, to keep myself, under the conditions. I even went through like the motions of washing myself just to feel and try to think, its ironic we were thinking, I remember that Binna and I was talking, said, if we're going to go out from here, once in my lifetime I want to still have a whole loaf of bread. That was my dreams. Dreams change. It was one of my dreams. When I was, before the Holocaust, I was dreaming of getting a good formal education, become a writer. When I was in Auschwitz, I was dreaming about once in my life, before I die, once to have the feeling of not going, my stomach should not turn from hunger, have cramps, hunger cramps. And the other dream was still to be free. To be able to walk once in my lifetime still without the guards walking with me, with the guns and having to march. I-spy-dry-links (ph), I-spy-dry-links (ph), I still hear that in my head, the columns. And to see people dying and suffering in a world of destruction when I was brought up to respect life. This was, and another thing that we were naive, and I see now that its not so, is that whoever goes out, if I have one dress, just a clean dress and someplace to put my head I will not ask for anything more, but if I have a loaf of bread, a clean dress. We wanted so little. But we still have not faced reality then because in concentration camp, in Auschwitz, I was with other people. And actually, even though the conditions were so horrible, somebody still took care, I still have someplace to, even that was the horrible conditions, but I had where to put my head down. And even though there was so little, hardly enough to get through the day, food, I still had somebody. So after age 13 I was never on my own. I never, I was protective, loving environment. Here completely alone except for Binna, which became my friend from, in Auschwitz. I didn't know her from before. And then, to go out in the world, I didn't face it because at that time all we had, all we were thinking about is of surviving. Of having the things, the things that I want. So at that time I wasn't thinking of other things. It's not until I came out _____ that everything hit me. And so we were in Auschwitz and with all this here, constantly dead around us. No separation between life and death. The dead people were not buried there. They put them, they took them in, they had like a little wagon and they would pull them away. And if somebody died when we were at work or was killed, we had to carry them back to the concentration camp to be counted, because we knew we are accountable. They made us responsible, one for the other. And this was going on for years. And not having, loneliness, cold, starvation.

Q: You had to carry bodies, you personally carried bodies back?

A: I personally was fortunate that I didn't have to, but there were many times that our commanders, you know, it was a commander, you were assigned to a specific group, we had to carry home, somebody was killed or died on the way, we had to carry them home. Dead or alive they had to be accounted for.

Q: Do you remember other things that you and your friend talked about?

A: We was talking about how, that when we going to get out we are going to be grateful. And you know, I'll tell you something. You know, intuition has nothing to do with logic, right? But you know, I once read that the heart knows of the reason, that reason doesn't know heart. But actually, one time, its like, I don't know, it was not at night, its not what I was dreaming. Its just like a, its like a vision that I see that I am free and people are standing around me and asking me what the number is. I didn't know whether the outside world knows. I didn't know at all what it was. I was isolated. Imagine, in older years, not only did they take away everything from me but they stole three, six years, nearly six years of my life. They stole the chance of education. They stole the chance, I never could go to proms, to dates. So from one thing to the other. And still they didn't finish in Auschwitz. In 1945, it was January 8.

Q: Okay, but I want to still ask you a few more questions before we move on?
A: Yes.
Q: When it started getting, more transports would come in. Did the conditions get worse or did they stay pretty much the same?
A: The condition got constantly worse for me because I became weaker. My body was almost like a skeleton. And the longer you suffer the harder it gets. And to see the constant destruction. Because I, I cannot praise myself and say, but I had, it was helping me to see the people suffer. It is helping me when I see that, I wanted to help somebody. They didn't allow us to help each other. We had to do it in hiding. Let's say if somebody fell and you were to lift up and to help you got beaten. Sometimes you both could get killed.
Q: So you got weaker but you didn't get less food or treated worse or anything like that?
A: Well personally it didn't change that much, but the only thing is that there was more, the transport was so constantly, the smoke coming and the music playing. And more people, we lost more people. So that was the worst thing.
Q: Did the music playing when you went in and out of work too? When you left for work every day?
A: Basically the music plays mostly when a new transport came.
Q: Did you pass by or did you live near the crematorium?
A: I have, I was never in the building where the crematorium because if I would be there I wouldn't be here speaking to you.
Q: No, I'm saying were you nearby there?
A: No, not so near.
Q: So you didn't see the people being taken there, that kind of thing?
A: No. Even my own family. When they took away, I just saw them taking them on the trucks, but I didn't see them taking this here. But what they did with them and the conditions there, this I found out afterwards. I also found out that the people who worked in the crematorium, every three months they would gas them too. Because they were most anxious that nobody should know. They wanted to wipe out every trace of the crime.
Q: Who were the guards? Who were your guards?
A: I didn’t know them personally.
Q: Were they Germans? Were they Polish? Were there Jewish guards too?
A: No. No Jewish guards. Mostly I heard German. There was also like somebody who watched over us. We were watched constantly. Back breaking labor, which was not useful, starvation, isolation, all those things you know, any, this is why if there is a plague we experienced it. If there is a plague we experienced this.
Q: So your guards and the work commandos. Your _____, all of these people you really didn't have any contact with, other than them watching you?
A: Yes.
Q: Were they mean to you?
A: The guards were terribly mean because if you for one second to stop to say something you got beaten. If you wanted to help somebody you could get beaten or shot. They teased us, they mocked us deliberately. You know, and constantly lived under the fear that you can be taken away. The fear of getting sick. So constantly. And then after a while if you, like I made up my mind, live or die. Because everybody has to die. But it was important to, I was grateful each day I _____ they did not assign me some kind of duties or things to do which would dehumanize me really. Because what they said about the dead didn't dehumanize me. That dehumanized them.

Q: What about corruption? Were you aware of other prisoners trying to get stuff or being able to kind of manipulate the situation?
A: From whom to get stuff?
W: From whom ever they could get, I don't know, guards or?
A: The thing is, the guards, those who were there were already sadistic and cruel, otherwise they wouldn't be there. And with the guards we couldn't, I told you from the beginning, it was _____, they, we were, the dogs. A dog should also be treated with respect because everything that God created should, but the dogs had better than we had. They loved all their dogs. Sometimes they would let their dogs bite some people. And a lot of mockery. That I felt, okay, they say that they had to carry out their duty. But they really didn't. They could resist. They could say no. They couldn't maybe, when Hitler became so powerful, but they could have done that in the beginning. My mother risks my life and hers and she wouldn't do because she would rather have died than to turn in another person and to survive on somebody else's expense.
Q: Were all the prisoners in your block Jewish?
A: Yes. Only Jewish people. In our barracks were only Jewish. I didn't have contact with non-Jewish people. I didn't have any contact, there was no men. The men were separated. In all those years that I, in all the time I was there the only people that I saw is Jewish people.
Q: You came from a very loving family?
A: Yes.
Q: A very affectionate, loving family. Were you able to recreate some of that warmth and affection with your friend there?
A: Yes. We were very, very nice to each other. We tried to help each other. Like I said, we would share, when she had her worse day she would give me a little of her food and we always tried to encourage, not to give up. We used to say, and we spoke always Yiddish with each other, and I used to say to her, "They want to kill us. We must not help them." We really make a conscious effort. Physically I had no choice because they could take us away anytime. They didn't need a reason. They had complete control of our lives. But at least we tried not to destroy, we tried to encourage each other. Maybe tomorrow something will happen. _____. And I didn't realize it but I must have had always a very deep faith, very deep faith. I'll tell you something, which is not, it didn't happen then . . .
Q: Let me just, I just want to finish this. As I'm trying to get a sense of how all of the prisoners related to each other, the, you mostly related to this one girl? The older people didn't try to take care of the younger people or any of that?
A: There wasn't so many older . . .
Q: Well, but there were people older than you?
A: Yes, there were people older. No. People were helpful to each other because we knew that we are, we share the same circumstances, the same destiny. There were, I talk mostly about Binna because I was closest with her. With her I become, we shared such a traumatic, such an extreme experience. And that's when you really get to know people. That's where the weaknesses, and when I saw the contrast of Esther to her. With Esther I never hounded, I never, I wish if she is alive until today, I don't even hold that against her because under those circumstances not everybody was strong, to resist. But the point it, she didn't want to do me harm, she just couldn't resist the hunger so I, this was my only experience where somebody from the girls were mean to me. I never suffered any cruelties from the Jewish girls there.
Q: Did you share physical affection? I don't mean necessarily sexual, but just that sort of warmth that people need from each other?

A: There wasn't too much of this here. We were dirty, we were cold, we were tired constantly. On the job you were this, but I could feel for instance that Binna cared for me. Because as I went to the gate, we were going to go through the gate, and when she knows that they always looked how you look, not that they needed _____ because they took away my family and they were Nazi, so she would say, "Yit-cola (ph), you are pale." She pinched my cheeks. I would do the same for her. If we stood in the pen or where we stood, she said, "Get into this light." She was three years older than I, so it was like, in fact, after the liberation when we were together some people said, "Well, she's acting like she's your mother." She just felt about me like I'm her younger sister. But affection, hugging, kissing? There was not, no, there was not affection. You feel, you don't have just _____, okay, physical affection is very important because at home I could not walk by my parents or my grandmother without a hug and a kiss. But this was not the place, it was not the time. If you would see, we were so thin, so skeletal, so dirty, so lonely, so terrible, so full of pain, that those things wasn't even on the mind. You know, the hug. It wasn't because we hug each other, there was not, you came home from work. I don't remember it, special hugging each other. The only time was like if one of us broke down, the other would embrace and say, try to comfort and say, especially like this. No, I felt deprived and I missed this a lot because I was always an affectionate person.
Q: That's why I was asking you.
A: Yes, I missed it terribly.
Q: Were you at all aware of when Jewish holidays were?
A: No.
Q: Did you have much information about the rest, what was going on in the rest of the camp?
A: Not at all. Very isolated, not knowing what, just this world. Getting cup, coming to the barrack, waiting, and by the time you got your piece, little food, and everything and the _____ finished, especially in the cold, you were so glad, you were so tired that you laid down. Sometimes you were too tired to talk even.
Q: When you first got there, were there prisoners who had been there longer who would give you advice?
A: When I came in the beginning, I described to you the conditions. I was very, very down, very worried to what's happened to my family. But when I found out I was so, felt betrayed, I felt shocked, I felt grieved, I felt so many emotions. And I was just, I don't know if it wouldn't be for Binna, whether I would have even survived. Just knowing that we need each other for support, that she is already an orphan and alone. And you can't imagine how many times I told her about the story, Buncho (ph) the Silent. Because I remember that, when my mother finished reading this story and I asked her, I'll never forget this, and I said, "How could Buncho (ph) the Silent endure so much suffering and pain?" And my mother answered me, "My child, sometimes are many stronger than iron and other times we can't enough lie, but no one knows their own strength until they are ever tested." And that's when I found out, if somebody would tell me, this I remember this thing. That the very first time when I came and I saw the conditions, I saw everything. And for the first time I was isolated from my family, I said to myself, at that time I was not in contact with anybody yet, I'm not going to survive here one day. And you know something? It was ironic. When I went on the March of the Living, there was a girl and the first day she said to me, "Yit-cola (ph), I'm not going to make it." And I said, "Survivors don't give up, honey." And I told her, that when I was in concentration camp, that I'm not going to make it, and I made it. You're going to make it, I'm going to help you. And she called me, you know, what kind of award I got. It was funny. At the end, when we were going already from the airport to Philadelphia, two kids who were very creative, they

observed everyone. So somebody, they took a napkin and they tore it in pieces and they wrote down, one got the award for the best dancer, one for the best whatever, and I got the Bobbie (ph) award. I was to them the Bobbie (ph), the grandmother. And she even introduced me to her father by saying, "Yit-cola's (ph) my adopted grandmother." And all the kids say, I'm like a Bobbie (ph) to her.

Q: Did you toward the end do different work assignments or did you stay mostly on that one?

A: No. Toward the end of it almost, toward the end of 1944 I got a lucky stroke. I was given a job to the _____, the _____ they called it, the _____. _____ they were called because we were wearing red kerchiefs.

Q: How did you get this assignment?

A: Just was lucky. Somebody must have died or something or maybe they needed more. I don't know. But one day, instead of taking me out, they took me to the commander. And that was, I wish it would have happened earlier then I would not have lost so much weight and so much suffering. Because this was better, for several reasons. First of all, you didn't have to work outside. The outside work was a killer. Many, many people died. I was young and maybe that helped me to survive, I don't know. But anyhow, in the _____ we would go, we work inside. Our work consisted of selecting, you know the people who arrived they took away everything from them. It came from the, and all the bundles were brought to the _____, they called it. Why they called it Canada (ph) I cannot tell you, I don’t know. But this is what it was called. And my job, and the jobs of those who were there, was to take apart the bundles and to select and to put in bundles the towels with towels, and all this went to Germans for their economy. Everything that was ours became theirs.

Q: Was it strange going through other people's belongings?

A: It was very strange. But we had no choice. We had to obey orders. At least, it was not hurting people. Those were things.

End of Tape 3.

Tape 4

Q: You were telling me about the work commando at Canada.

A: Yes. In Canada we had to work also every day. My work consisted, and everybody's work actually consisted, we took apart the bundles and we had to select them. Put each item of the same kind in bundles and in places. Now, let me start with the advantage for me. The advantage was that I didn't have to work outside. I was shielded a little from the cold and from the heat. The work was easier than it was to drag the stones and everything else. And also I couldn't take anything from there but there were Nazis that were watching us too. But what I could do, occasionally but not always, nobody could see. Let's say if I found a piece of bread, I couldn't take it out but I could take a piece of it and eat it. So that provided a little extra food for me. Then there was something that they did that if it wouldn't be for what my mother taught me, that my _____ does not depend on how others treat me but how I treat others, I would feel ashamed to tell this here. It's just like a woman who is raped, and it doesn't have a good self and she doesn't understand that it's the victimizer not the victim who is suppose to feel ashamed, then I would feel ashamed to tell you this here. But I don't. I feel pained. When we were leaving, every single day, the most humiliating, the most painful thing, they would search us internally so we wouldn't smuggle out any diamonds, any gold, because sometimes you did find those things there. So we couldn't take out anything. And that was so humiliating for me. A girl who was modest, who wouldn't even undress in front of her parents. And you know I was like a budding teen-ager when the Holocaust begun. And here, to go through, that sometimes I wish I would have still walked in the outside commando because each time they did this, I felt like I was dying by inches. It was so humiliating and so disgusting to have these Nazis to search me. So as far as this, if you heard stories that somebody smuggled out, that's not true. _____, maybe they didn't tell you, but they searched us. They searched us every inch, all over, even internally so what, how can you smuggle something out?

Q: Were you searched by men or women?

A: Sometimes were men, sometimes women. It was not, and either way it was disgusting, it was horrible. I feel, I cannot tell you how much, how I felt. Because I was never, until I came to _____ I never had a internal examination. And this was my experience, it was horrible. And also the horrible thing was to see, to know that, seeing all the things from some families brought beautiful things because they were not in ghetto, they came in and many people were rich. And knowing that the people are dead and that these clothes are going to go away for the German economy, that for the Jewish children who were wearing the clothes, Jewish mothers and fathers and grandfathers. I shed plenty of tears. The only advantage was that I was warm and had a little bit of extra food. That was the only advantage of this job.

Q: So in your two years plus in Auschwitz, basically you had this job and you had that outside work?

A: That's all. It started physically and emotionally and spiritually in every single way. That's why I related to you the story about going to _____ because I thought, how could a writer stand so much suffering and abuse, and I don't know _____ because at that time, it was almost like it felt, why was Buncho (ph) the Silent silent, why didn't he say something? But I had to find out that I had to be silent to survive because even when they called me number, tried to reduce me to a number, I couldn't say loudly or anything, but under my breath I said, Yit-cola (ph). You know what I called my number? My badge of honor. And somebody asked me once, a reporter, why do you call it your badge of honor? And I told him. I got the number merely for being born Jewish. To be born Jewish or Gentile is not a choice, but to murder people because they are different, because they are Jewish or Gentile and because somebody gets a crazy idea that somebody is

superior to somebody else, which is a figment of Hitler's imagination, then this is something which made me even more proud to be Jewish.
Q: Toward the end, did you have a sense that you might get out of there? That the war was shifting, that there was a possibility you would be free?
A: I had no, I didn't have any knowledge what was going outside. There was no paper, no _____ of communication, no meeting with anybody else. I didn't have any contact.
Q: No rumors?
A: No rumors. Nothing. I didn't hear anything. I don't know, it seemed to me like all I did was work, come home, just waited. Couldn't wait to get, to lay down, to put down your head, it was so exhausted and cold. And sometimes, you know what was our, but that was not done deliberately, we slept so many on one bunk bed. So out of necessity of the overcrowdedness we slept on the side like I told you, close one another. So that was our, you know body gives out heat too. So we had one blanket, everybody was pulling in different direction. So laying, whoever was lucky was laying in the middle, felt less cold. So it was not, its an existence, not knowing. Can you imagine? All those years, not having the things which you take for granted. Like a piece of toilet tissue? How degrading.
Q: So you had no idea what was going on?
A: I didn't know anything what was going on. I was living, each day was the same from day to day. Just knew inwardly, emotionally, spiritually that I need to hold on. But that's all.
Q: And by saying that, I need to hold on, there obviously was some hope that you would get through it?
A: No, I don't. But you know what? I remembered the upbringing I had, that we never, we don't give up hope. We don't give up hope. In fact, I remember saying, from my family, _____ _____, which means as long as one vein is still moving there is hope. So we were hoping. I had even after the Holocaust situations where everybody gave up hope. I didn't. I'm not this kind of a person.
Q: So how did you happen to leave Auschwitz?
A: I didn't, again, I didn't make any choice. In Auschwitz, the only choice I made is, you cannot always pick circumstances but you can pick responses. So the only choice I made, to live or to die, with dignity, with Menschlichkeit, and to hold on as long as I can. So I didn't make any choice, but one morning we woke up and I didn't even know what's happened. We didn't have the _____. They started to chase us out. And we started on the death march. And that was the most horrible thing because you survive for so long and here we had to march because the Nazis wanted to make sure that we should not get into the hands of the Russians. They wanted, they blew up some, I didn't see them do that, but later I was, now I know how many things they blew up. They tried to destroy all the evidence of the crimes that they committed. So we had to march.
Q: What did they say to you? What happened?
A: They didn't say anything. They said, "Just go. Go." And what happened, and we even in concentration camp we were not allowed ultimately to help each other, in their presence. But here was even worse. Because if one, we had to walk. It was, imagine Poland is very, very cold. We were now in April and it was still pretty cold.
Q: January.
A: No, no. I was . . .
Q: The march?
A: No, the march of the living was in January but when I was now in Auschwitz, when I went to visit now . . .

Q: Okay. But I'm talking about, I'm confusing this. Let's stay with 1945 because it's getting confusing.
A: Right. I'm just trying to tell you the truth, very cold.
Q: It was in January?
A: In January, January 18th we were chased out. I didn't know at the time if everybody was left or not because there was no time to find out. And what they did or didn't do, once I wasn't there I couldn't see. But we had to march on foot. If you stopped, if you fell, they shot you. If somebody fell or couldn't go you were not allowed to help them. So many people, there were plenty people who I saw on the way who was laying dead. And we could not do anything about it. This is the most, this probably, besides my own experience from my own suffering, this was the most horrible thing for me. To be human and not to be able to help another human being, if somebody falls. Lived for so many years and then in that way to die? A lot of people died on the way. A lot of people died on the way. And we started to march on January 18, 1945 and we came to Ravensbruck. I'm thinking _____, I wrote down the date someplace. It escapes me now because I'm so, I'm going to give you the dates I wrote it down but not right now.
Q: January 24?
A: I think. Six day march, after six days, okay?
Q: Were there people from a lot of different barracks or was it just your group on this march?
A: There was lots of people. I don't know whether the whole camp or not because I don't know, what the case was. But there was, you could see like marching very, very long. And not until we were almost German, and then they took us to this, to Revensbruck. We arrived to Ravensbruck.
Q: Okay. On the march, did they give you any food? Did you stay someplace at night? Did you sleep?
A: We had to walk. Walk and walk. Not until we were already on the German soil, and I don't know exactly what spot it was, then there was like some trucks that picked us up. And on the truck on the way we fell asleep, standing, sitting, in anyplace. But while you walked you had to stay alive and to be silent, to be Buncho (ph) the Silent.
Q: Did they give you any bread or anything?
A: Not while we were walking. Some people had a little piece, people died of thirst, of cold. It was so cold and with the clogs, with the frozen feet. And by that time we were skeletons. Most of us was more dead than alive. If it would take a little longer we probably would not have made it.
Q: Was it all women on the march?
A: I marched with all women. Maybe there were men too but when they chased us out of the camp from the rest it was, I mostly saw women. Maybe men came too but when they took us out we were all women.
Q: And you were with your friend?
A: Yes. Fortunately she made the march. And then we came to Ravensbruck.
Q: Oh I know, there was one other question I did want to ask you. As you were marching did you notice any of the local people along the way?
A: I didn't notice anything. I was just having one thing in mind, the only thing I looked if Binna is still walking with me. That was my concern and if they other girls, if nobody is, and I knew with the last strength, I don't know with what strength I, I remembered my mother's words, "Sometimes a man is stronger than I am."
Q: I just wondered if people saw you marching?
A: This I don't know. I was too involved, to make sure that I can make it, you know, when you went so long.

Q: So what happened when you arrived at Ravensbruck?
A: We arrived at Ravensbruck, that's a date that I also wrote but right now I'm so upset, when I'm thinking about this Canada, the _____, the search.
Q: I think you've said that you were there about two to three weeks?
A: Yes. I think February 24 I think?
Q: January 24 to February 11?
A: February 11th, right. January 18th we were chased and then we came six days later, the six-day march, and then we came in February 11th. And there was also, this was the only concentration camp, death camp, on German soil that has also gas chambers.
Q: Ravensbruck?
A: Ravensbruck.
Q: And you were there for two or three weeks?
A: Yes.
Q: What was it like?
A: What was it like? Same kind of suffering, same kind of suffering still. They still didn't let go. And I made a stew and Esther dead. They took us, this time we didn't have to walk already, they took us with trucks. And they brought us to another concentration camp in Malchow, Germany. In the Malchow, Germany they had no gas chambers.
Q: You didn't work in Ravensbruck did you?
A: Not very much. It was not a long time. It was already confusion. Did some work but it was not already as extensive as it was in Auschwitz.
Q: So in the daytime?
A: We did work but, yes we did work. I'm trying to think because I know I worked in an ammunition factory, but that was in Malchow. Because I remember we sabotaged a lot of the things there.
Q: So, in Ravensbruck during the day . . .?
A: We did work. I don't remember exactly what type of work we did there. To an ammunition factory or something. There was not any Canada or anything like this here anymore. I don't remember. I don't have that many because Auschwitz, other towers, everything _____, this is why I, the others is, but I know that there was crematoriums. I was less shielded.
Q: Do you remember any striking differences between Ravensbruck and Auschwitz?
A: It wasn't as huge. I didn't hear the orchestra playing so that was the, and there wasn't so many people. And I didn't stay so long so there I have, when I speak even though I was there but I must not speak of Auschwitz because that's where, it was the last day when I came with family, that was the last day on earth for my entire family. Thousands of Jews from the ghetto Nove Mesto including my friends and relatives. And the first day of _____, that's why Auschwitz was the worst of it, Birkenau, that was the worst.
Q: Well of course, and you also were there much longer. I was just trying to get a picture.
A: Yes, we did work but I don't, I remember that after that, after Auschwitz, I no longer worked on the outside commando. So it must either an ammunition factory or something. To be very honest with you I don't remember because I didn't stay that long there. But I know that there was gas chambers and I know they wouldn't just sit and not do anything.
Q: And the people, the other prisoners who were there when you arrived, they looked pretty much like the people at Auschwitz? They were thin and sick?
A: Not everybody, not everybody because it depended on the length of time. That had a lot to do, it depended on the physical strength of a person. Some were, not just _____ people but they were

fortunate they didn't get sick because if you got sick it's the end. I don't remember Ravensbruk (ph) in as many details but I know it was, the people there was more Polish people in Ravensbruk (ph). A lot of Polish people and some were a little older too. So it seems like they allowed older people maybe more there to come.
Q: So then they took you to Malchow?
A: And they took and brought me to Malchow. And I came there with Binna too. And there, to my recollection, there was no gas chambers anymore. We still were treated badly, we still had little food. The only good better thing was, and we went every day to work, and the conditions were horrible. The only better thing was for me personally, for Binna, that we didn't work outside. Because outside, winter or summer, without clothes, the proper clothes without. That was, and we worked inside and we, there I remember exactly what, an ammunition factory. And I know that they gonna use this ammunition maybe against us or other people so whenever we could sabotage something we did.
Q: How?
A: How? You know, like if you're suppose to put it on this way you put it in the opposite. I didn't have any tools or anything to sabotage it but not to do it. And if you could work slower we worked slower, you know, the productions. And we knew, whatever we can we didn't want to do to help the Nazis. To help them to succeed.
Q: Was anybody, of the prisoners, kind of organizing this? Sort of advising people what to do? Or you just thought this up on your own?
A: With what?
Q: With the sabotage.
A: That was a pretty veiled conception. We all wanted all the time but what could we do? We couldn't. In Auschwitz I couldn't, what could I sabotage?
Q: But here did people talk about it? Did they, when you were new there did people who were already there make suggestions or you just figured it out?
A: Some word would get out and some we saw other people doing it. It was not discussed, we were afraid to talk. You know, somebody, you never knew who can hear us or something. But we saw that whenever we could, not to do properly or something, then we did it. If it would be, I don't know. Knowing myself, I don't know, if I had opportunity to damage the Nazis, that I don't know if I could do. But the things that helped them to kill people, that I did with good conscious.
Q: And enjoyed doing it?
A: Not a question enjoyed, but almost felt like a responsibility. It felt that, they used everything for destruction, you know? People can be creators or destroyers of life. Everything can be used for good and evil. That is the education, I was dreaming about a formal education but I tell you, there is no substitute for personal experience. And what this experience in the concentration camp taught me no professor, no text books, no school could teach me. Because there you had the consequences of your action. When, learning, book learning is important but it doesn't have consequences. It's not the same thing. It's one thing to read about slavery than being a slave. It's one thing about losing, if somebody lost a family, than losing your own. Same thing about suffering, about believing from that my ancestors were in Egypt, its different when you go _____ on yours. Then you know. And then something happens inside you. Depending on your attitude. You become either bitter or better. My mother's last words were not to become bitter and hateful and not to let them destroy, and I realize this now. That hate is the most destructive thing.
Q: What else can you tell me about Malchow?

A: Well I can tell that Malchow? I just felt everyday, everyday was like you want another lease on life. I know that the worse the condition got the longer it took. We tried to encourage each other again, maybe tomorrow, don't give up, hold on. That was like a _____, don't give up. Don't give them the victory, don't give them the final victory. And we just went, we knew we were trapped and we were hoping for a miracle. And not knowing if its going to happen. It just went on. Worked and another day, another day, not knowing what's going to happen.
Q: Now at this point did you have a little bit more information about the war?
A: No.
Q: Still?
A: We didn't have contacts with anyone. From 1942, until I came to concentration camp. Actually from the ghettos we knew nothing, until I came to the ghetto, before the ghetto I could still hear rumors or something but nobody, we didn't have, who could tell us? The only people that we saw when I was in concentration camp is the inmates and the Nazis.
Q: I just figured that maybe at this point you might have some sense that you had been moved into Germany . . .?
A: No I didn't because I didn't know. Because, I had been told not to build, not to assume. An assumption is different from a fact. So I didn't know, so I didn't make any assumption. I just hoped and prayed and tried to hold on for as long as I could. That's all.
Q: How long were you there?
A: I was there until I was liberated on, during Passover, April 26, 1945.
Q: What happened?
A: What happened? That's an interesting story. I woke up one morning. No _____. Commotion. And then the Swedish Red Cross came to save us. Not everybody. They took out mostly those who were sick and by that time I was pretty sick. And Binna and I, and a few other people, there was a girl, Franya Gilman (ph), she was also on our truck. And ironically, being deceived by the Nazis about this, Red Cross. When I saw this Red Cross I was afraid to go up. But you know, people convey messages by words, by their emotion, by their body language. And those people didn't seem like Nazis. First of all, they didn't wear the uniforms. And I felt that this is not, but at first there was fear to go up. But, so they took us on the trucks. From on the date that I gave you and the war was still going on because it didn't finish officially. So a bomb, a part of a bomb fell in our truck and it hit Franya Gilman (ph) and Franya Gilman (ph) had to have her foot amputated. That was already toward the end, on the way. And from there we traveled from Germany to via Copenhagen.
Q: I want to ask you a question before you continue. When you say you saw the Swedish Red Cross, where were the Nazi guards? Where were the Germans at this point?
A: I didn't see the Nazis. I don't know what's happened to them. I didn't see anybody. All of a sudden I didn't see, in the commotion, we didn't know, something _____. And frankly I didn't know what was going on. I didn't know if I should be happy or should be unhappy, I didn't know what was going on. But then they came and they helped me. By that time I was pretty sick. And they helped me to come to a truck, they helped me up. And we came to, we traveled. It took a whole day. At night I remember we were in a barn, in Copenhagen, Denmark, Copenhagen.
Q: Did you take a boat?
A: No, no. By bus. Not bus, by trucks. Trucks also. But not such a, not with Nazis anymore. And I didn't know what to think, I felt sick and I didn't know already but I saw from the way they touched us because the Nazis never would touch us because we were full of lice and _____. And those people seemed to be kind and we came Denmark. So we stayed

over night in a barn. And after that they brought us to Lund, Sweden. A university city, to a hospital. And I was alive but I had no home to live in so the hospital, they gave me my first home after liberation. But before we went in we had to strip again, naked, throw away the tattered concentration camp shift, and we got a bed. And after all those years, nearly six years, I saw myself in front of the mirror. I couldn't speak a lot of Swedish, or understand. I was stateless, homeless, penniless, jobless. Unlike my non-Jewish fellow survivors, I couldn't go back home to my family, to my relatives, to my friends because Jewish home, Jewish families and Jewish communities were destroyed. I had no one left, to help me, to love me, to wait for me, or to miss me. But I missed terrible, everybody. And I remember the shock I got when I saw myself for the first time in the mirror. I didn't know myself. I didn't see myself all those years. And it was no sign of womanhood. Another thing, during this Auschwitz I didn't get my period. Until this day, I don't know the reasons why. That was malnutrition or whether they were putting something in the food? I would suspect its malnutrition. And I didn't know if I am going to be like a normal woman. And when I saw myself in the mirror, I started to scream. The nurses didn't know what's happened. And I didn't know how to explain. [end of side 1 of tape 4] Anyhow, I, it was a coincidence because I was born during Passover and I was liberated during Passover. And I had less, I had more on the day when I was born than the day of liberation. Not a tangible shred was left of my pre-war childhood world. Not a single document, not a family annual, not a photograph, nothing. And the Swedish people in the hospital were very kind. Very, very kind, very caring. And to me, if I didn't get beaten that was already a lucky day. Because then I started to realize I didn't know anything what was happen, with Hitler, I didn't know what's Germany, I didn't know how the war is. I was away from the war for nearly six years, not having any contact, isolated from the whole world. Not reading, not knowing anything. I only knew what I sensed, what I felt and what I, by comparison. And I talked to myself and I started to realize how one person can make a difference. This was Gentile people and this was Gentile people. One destroyed so many of my people, the other saved them. And I started to understand many, many things. Not immediately, because in the beginning I was too sick to think and it was lonely. Binna fortunately survived too. At what point I realized . . .

Q: That you were actually free?

A: When I was with the Swedish Red Cross. Then I started to realize, when we were going, when we came to Copenhagen and I saw that they treat us, it was like between night and day, the contrast. They treat us kindly, the others treated us cruel. They took care of us.

Q: And you felt you were able to trust them?

A: At first I was afraid to go because I didn't know. What the Red Cross represented to me destruction of so many people at first. But then I didn't see any Nazis. I wasn't, I was naive, I was young but I wasn't completely stupid. And I could see that, the difference of the way they treated us and, you know? They fed us.

Q: What did it feel like, being liberated?

A: It was a tremendous shock, a tremendous, the transition was not, I didn't, all the time I dreamt about being free but the every day struggle to survive, to get through the day, not to be put to the gas chambers, not to be maimed, not to be, health, and to live. It was the struggle to survive so that you couldn't think about all the other things. You were with everybody together. Many people together, we were on the same boat like we used to say. But when we were liberated, and when I came there, I couldn't speak the language. I was 19 years old. I couldn't understand a word of anything. A stranger in a strange world. Not having anyone. And all of a sudden, in the beginning right away I didn't even think so much. I was too sick, too tired, the shock was very much. But then the very

first time, I will never forget, but this was later, but I'm sharing now an experience when I was the first time, or maybe I should go when I come to it.
Q: Okay.
A: I was in the hospital there. I was getting good care. The contrast was a sharp contrast from the way the Nazis treated us here. And I remember one thing I was thinking, if this is, I remember I was seeing the differences because I always had the ability because I was creative to compare. I said, "This is Gentiles and this is Gentiles." So good and evil, no one has a monopoly on it. It has more to do with the _____. With who you are as a human being. What you believe about yourself, about God and about others. That effects your behavior. And therefore, I realized even more what my mother's last words, don't become hateful and bitter, don't let them destroy you, I realized what tragedies and hatred is. And the more the Nazis tortured me, the more I was determined never to become like them, to view myself through their eyes. And here I saw kind people. I had a very, very wonderful memories. Very, very grateful to the Swedish people, the way they helped me. They helped me to get on my feet. I have nothing. I came in, like I said, I had more on the day I was born. Here I went in the hospital, I came in nude because they couldn't allow this filthy dress to come in this here, the first thing, we came in and took the showers and they helped me to bathe, covered, nurse me back to health. And for this I will be always grateful because I learned not to take anyone or anything for granted. Because its very easy to lose everything. And we stayed in the hospital and then, I think I gave you all the dates, right?
Q: Well I don't know . . .
A: Otherwise I have everything, I have it all written down.
Q: I don't know how long you were in the hospital, I just know that you arrived in Lund on April 28th.
A: Right. Because on the 26th I was liberated. On the 27th I was in Copenhagen. The 28th I arrived. And at that time, when I started to get healthy I started to examine and to re-evaluate everything. What is it? Who is responsible? And basically what I was interested is, in the beginning, to regain my health. I started concentrating on regaining my health because I realize that health is wealth, health is important because if you're sick and you are alone, you cannot do very much. And I was very much aware that I no longer have anyone to love me, to protect me, to take care of me. So I needed to become my own parent and start taking care of myself. Of course, Binna and I were still very devoted and very loyal to each other and we were each other's family at the time. And I was there in the hospital, I got very good care. I also was always fortunately a good student and always loved language, words. I always realized the power of words, so I was very eager to learn Swedish. So while there, I started, they were very kind to me, they gave me a dictionary and I started to learn a little bit. And to recover. And I was in Lund, Sweden until May 7, 1945. From there I was sent to Dod-ug-stup (ph) in Sweden. It's called Dod-ug-stup (ph), it's _____ you know? And this was DP Camp, which in Swedish is called _____. On Rinks-vagen (ph) 20 B, that was the address. Now there we were in a quarantine, we still couldn't go out because the people were afraid, if we are, if we don't carry any diseases or, so we were not treated badly, in fact we were treated very nice. However, we only got 50 cents a week, it's 50 _____, which is like 50 cents here, for pocket money. And we started, the people from the town came to the, there was also a fence, but was not barbed wires, it was not electrocuted wires, and we would come to the fence and they looked. Some came and we would give them sometimes the money and ask them to buy little trinkets for us. And there was a couple with a young son, must have been maybe early 20's, and with the few words that I could speak we made contact. I already recovered a little bit, looked a little better. And I didn't think of myself at that time as a woman yet, but obviously he thought of

me that way, and he asked me, and in the broken Swedish with the dictionary, I understood that when I get allowed, when I will be allowed to get out from the quarantine, will I go on a date with him. And that was the first date of my life, okay? So I was very excited and anxious. I didn't know how I'm going to know how to behave with a man, I didn't see a man for all those years. I didn't have any experience in dating and mating. I went out with him. It was a very, very painful experience for me. Because as soon as we started to talk, and not very much, he paid me a compliment, you don't look Jewish. And that was like a knife in my, twisted in my heart. Here I suffered so much and I'm not Jewish? And again, he doesn't see me as a human being. Yes, I'm not denying my Jewishness, I'm proud to be who I am. Would I be born a Gentile, I would be proud to be Gentile, but I'm born, I didn't make choices about this. It hit me so hard, and I don't believe he meant it in a bad way, in a malicious way. He was a kind person. But for somehow he reminded me who I am, not that I ever forgot it. And I said, "Good-bye." Excuse myself with tears in my eyes and I left. And I made a decision. Never will I go out with somebody who is not Jewish because I'm the only link left, the only daughter left of my family. I cannot do it to my family or to my people or to myself. And in our camp there, in the DP Camp, was a woman which was called, we called her _____, means she was a Rabbi's wife, so the husband is a Rabbi, she is the Rabbi's wife. So she was the Rabbi's wife and she was orthodox and she took a great interest, she wanted the children, those who are under 21, to remain Jewish. So she took us, she told us there is a camp that she wanted to take us. Also, we were not still completely free to go. A kosher, a camp. It was no, it was, I prefer kosher to not kosher of course at that time, but it wasn't so much the kosher because in the concentration camp I ate not kosher, so, but it was that I felt I need to be with Jewish people.

Q: The DP Camp was mixed?

A: The DP Camp was only Jewish, but when I went out, and he tells me this here, I was too wounded yet from the whole experience. Maybe if he would say today I would laugh it off, it wouldn't even have mattered to me this much. But at that time, I wanted to be accepted for who I am because I realized by that time, if I cannot be accepted for who I am surely I will not be accepted for what I am not. So I wanted somebody to accept me for, it's not that I had anything about a Gentile or anything, but I wanted to be, I needed to be among my people who are Jewish in order to know that I don't, shouldn't be told you don't look Jewish, or be accepted for who I am. So I volunteered to go to the camp. And on July 10, 1945 I left _____ and I went to Hel-shin-fel-hol-it (ph), this is what the place called. However, there was something which was troubling me. I wanted Binna to come too. I didn't want to separate. I thought of Binna as my extended family. The Rabbi's wife said, "Itka, I don't want to separate you from your friend, but I can't take her. Not now at least. Because I cannot make exceptions." And she was three years older so she could no longer go. But she said, "I give you my word that after a few weeks, I will bring her too. But not right now because then I cannot give _____ about this." So I decided to go and I told Binna that I'm going to try to make sure that she comes later. And the Rabbi's wife certainly kept her promise and she brought Binna there too.

Q: Now I have a question about actually both of these camps.

A: The DP Camps?

Q: Right. Because I'm curious who organized them and supported them? And also, what sort of activity went on in them? They were trying to, I think, restore people. Were there family tracing services? Did they have religious services? In these DP camps?

A: In the first camp there was hardly anything. There was just the emphasis on restoring us to health. Even when I came there, I was not physically that strong yet. So the emphasis was on

restoring, to get us used to a normal life, if you can call it normal. And so there was not much, we rested basically. We didn't do very much. It was more recuperating. It was like a convalescent home you would go from a hospital, that sense, except better because we were already, we were not invalids.
Q: Any religious services?
A: No. Not at that point. Nothing yet. At that point it was just plain start putting us a little in the, now when I came to Hem-shed (ph), we observed strictly the Shabbat. In fact, Mr. Pound (ph) was the name of the _____ and he could only speak Swedish. He was the, in Swedish was the _____. This was like the manger, like the, whatever you call it, when somebody is in charge of. He couldn't speak a single word of other language, just Swedish. So he asked, "Is there anyone who can speak Swedish a little?" _____. I learned quickly the language. While I was there, I was always with the dictionary and trying to learn the language. So he, I became his helper in the office. I had no training to be in an office and I wasn't asked to do any office work. My job consisted basically, translating. If somebody came in and needed something. We got sheets and pillow cases and things like this from there, so we needed to change them, I would be in charge of this here. If somebody, basically helping him translate and do duties like this but no office work because I had no training in this here.
Q: Who supported these camps?
A: I have no idea. At that time I didn't know, I was still not having, I was in the world already, in the normal world but it wasn't yet a normal life for me, it was not. So I would rather not say and tell you something which I have no knowledge. But I know it must have been, I don't know. Now I'm asking, I'm glad you're asking those question because maybe I'm going to ask around to find out.
Q: It may be _____, it may be International Red Cross.
A: Yeah, it could be somebody, maybe the Red Cross or maybe the Swedish . . .
Q: Or the World Jewish Congress, or . . .
A: Yeah, somebody. But who? I don't know at that time. But we had good meals. It was in a very nice place, physically it was a nice place, nice surroundings. A lot of nice greens and it felt good. When we came there we didn't have anything. Everybody got a suit case, the same kind, and a change of clothes next to what we were wearing. And sheets, pillow cases, soaps, towels, this we got from there. And I was working there and then at one point, I start to feel that I no longer want to be in collective life. I want to start a life on my own because when its collective, it has advantages, but it has the disadvantage. You don't develop an identity as much. I needed to start a field, build a life. So Binna and another girl, Regina Shapiro (ph), who was there also, we were assigned to go, we got our first job. And this, I didn't have any, I was 19 years old. I had no marketable skills and only seven grade of public school and a few grades of Hebrew school. So I didn't have, I had to take whatever job they would give me as long as it was respectable. And on November 18, 1945 I left, Binna Gold-gramp (ph) and Regina Shapiro (ph) and I left and we went to a _____, it called Redland-da (ph), _____
_____, you know, not so far from Bar-oss (ph). At that time I didn't know where its located. And Binna saw that we were, I mean Regina saw that we were like sisters and she was all alone so she asked us if she wants to be with us. And I said of course. So we went to work.
Q: You had complete freedom to leave when you wanted to?
A: Yes, at that time we could leave. That was because when I came there in _____ was in July and we went on November 18th, so by that time, yes, we could leave. Of course, a lot was still lacking to my complete health and everything else, but I was ready, I wanted to assume a job.

Q: Let me ask you something, did you think there was a chance that maybe some of your family members had survived? And did you think about going back to Poland?
A: Not once. I knew that they didn't. I knew that my immediate, when you say immediate family, doesn't . . .
Q: Not immediate family but you had a lot of cousins and . . .
A: I didn't go to Poland. I didn't have the means, I didn't have the strength, I didn't have the know-how, I didn't have the money, I didn't have anything. I just stayed, this is why later, towards the end, I'm going to just make a summation and you are going to see why I realized that, I'll talk about this later because then its going to make more sense than now. Anyhow, so when we went to work here, we came, that was my first job. Freedom by choice. Until that date, whatever I did is where they sent me, even to go into _____, to the kosher _____, the DP camp. I don't know if we didn't call it, we called it _____. I didn't even know that it exist, DP camp, so I was still cut off of the world. I had no communication because I wasn't on my own, I didn't have any radio, I didn't have, you know those things, papers and things. I couldn't read too well yet to be able to understand, so it was pretty tough still. And when I came to _____, on my first job I had a very traumatic experience. I came willing to except any job providing its respectable. I was determined, if I survived Auschwitz with dignity I will not, I was determined on three things not to give up, on my life, on my _____ and on my freedom. Because I realized without it life is not worth living for me. And I came there, there was basically a very tiny village. There was a sanatorium for children with TB. And most of the inhabitants there, I don't know how much the population, were people who were elderly people. Single, elderly people. There was very, I don't think there was anybody my age there. But at that time I didn't think about those things. I was just grateful and why I accepted the job also because it was room and board and I would still get paid a little. And I need that to have because that was, I didn't have a home still. I didn't have an apartment or anything on my own yet.
Q: How did you find out about this job?
A: Mr. Pound helped me out. Mr. Pound liked me a lot. In fact, he said to me, we got to know each other and he liked me a lot and he said, "Itka, if this doesn't work out you come back to me. I have a wife and children and we'll take you in until you get on your feet." He was very nice. He was not interested in me as a woman, he was interested as a human being, to help me. He saw me as a homeless child. And he offered, but I was determined to make it on my own. And we went there, and the general boss was a very nice woman. She would sometimes invite me for a walk, to go with her, she would help me a little with Swedish. Anyone who didn't help me was nice to me then, you know? The comparisons, you know? That's what I said, when you heard me saying a reference with which to compare. And she took me into the kitchen, assigned me to work in the kitchen. In contrast, the woman who was the manager of the kitchen, she was the general manager. The woman who was in the kitchen for no apparent reason hated me with a passion. From the moment she brought me in. Why? I have no idea and it doesn't surprise me. Half of the world hated me, that I didn't care and I survived, so I didn't worry about it anymore. However, she assigned me to her and one day the general boss said to me, "Make the sandwiches." As soon as she left, she would say, "Scrub the floor", or do something that was not as easy or as good as the other job. But I figured, I came here to work and I'm going to do what they tell me until I'm able to get on my feet and then I'll see. And I worked there and I got paid, not too much. And Binna, Regina and I shared one room and we got room and board. One day was my half a day off and I was going to leave and they burst from the kitchen, made like "Don't go!" And all of a sudden I had a flashback from concentration camp and I was getting nervous. And I very politely ask, "Why not?" "There are still

dishes", she answered. And I said, "There will always be dishes in our hospital, but it's my half a day off." Because I was thinking, if she would have asked me I would have gladly stayed. Because then I have a choice. But when I'm ordered I have no choice. And if I accept it once, the beginning is the most important, than I'm going to have to do it all the time. And I'll lose my freedom and I'm not ready to, after Auschwitz, never again will I give up my freedom willingly.
Q: Were you afraid to say no?
A: Nope. And I marched out. After Auschwitz I'm not afraid of anything. Just to do something to disgrace myself or my family. Other things I'm not afraid. What can scare me after Auschwitz? And as soon as I walked out, and I came to my room, this so-called good manager comes in and she says to me, "Itka, I heard what's happened. But would you do it for me? Go back?" And I had mixed feelings. The heart said one thing, the head said another. But I went back. Walking on the way, everything in me revolted. I said, "I'm sorry, I can't do it." I started to cry and I run back in and I didn't go in. I had been taught as a child that never make serious decision, long range decision when you're under emotional strain. So I told myself, I said, suppose I left? Where am I going to go? I have no home. The only option is to go to Mr. Pound and I don't want to do that. To be a burden for them. What future is there for me? It also meant to leave Binna, to separate from Binna. Because I didn't dare ask her, come with me, when I have nothing to offer. Not a place, not an apartment, not a job. So I said, no, I can't do it. So I went to the good boss and I told her how I feel about it, and I said, "Listen. I have no home and no place to go. But I am a survivor of a concentration camp. I got so much abuse that I promised that I will never allow anybody to abuse me again or give up my freedom. So I will gladly stay because I don't have any other place to go. Give me any job. I don't mind scrubbing toilet. Job doesn't scare me. I was working carrying stone and things. But I want to be treated with dignity. If somebody wants something from me, let them ask. And if I can I will gladly give, but I don't take orders anymore." And she said, "I'm sorry. I would gladly do it but she has been working for me for 36 years. I can't afford to lose her." After that I had no longer to think. So I figured, so again not justice. It's just for convenient for me. At that point I said, whatever is involved, whatever risk, I must take it. I went in with tears in my eyes, I said good-bye to both my friends. They didn't offer to come and I didn't ask them. At that time I didn't even consider, I didn't even, now I am thinking, how come I didn't offer to come Binna? I wouldn't let them anyhow, but they didn't. You know, everything went so fast. And I picked myself up and I went. Like Buncho (ph) the Silent. Went to the world with no one, an orphan, with no one to care. And when I came to the train, they asked me where do you want to go?
End of Tape 4.

Tape 5

Q: At the last tape you were getting ready to get on a train for somewhere.
A: Somewhere. And when I came to the train, running not walking, because I want to make the train. I didn't have too many belongings to take with me, I didn't have very much. And I didn't even have time to buy the ticket at the office, at the station, but I boarded on the train. And the conductor asked me, "Where are you going?" I said, "To the nearest, largest city." Because I didn't know Sweden at that time, I hadn't been around yet. So he said, "Boss (ph)? Boss (ph), Sweden? You know Boss (ph)?" I said, "Okay." And that's where I learned. When I came into Boss (ph), Sweden, I did not know a single soul. I had no home. And all of a sudden it dawned on me. Where am I going now? Now I am completely alone. No family, and not even friends. My two friends are also without me. Where am I going to sleep? What am I going to do? And I walked quite a while, mostly I was completely oblivious of time, I didn't know, and in desperation, when I started to realize my situation, that I have nothing. I have no money. I have no home. I'm a homeless person and I'm all alone. Even as bad as it was in concentration camp, I knew this is where I'm going to sleep at night. Here, I don't have anything. And I must admit I was concerned. And all of a sudden I looked up to Heaven and I found myself praying. And I remember exactly what I said, inside myself. Dear God, I am all alone and I am helpless. I'm in your hands. Guide me. I don't want to do something to disgrace myself or my family. And I had been walking, I don't know how long, and then all of a sudden I thought that I hear somebody saying, "Yit-cola." I said, am I losing my mind? I'm hearing voices? And again I hear repeating, "Yit-cola." And I look around and a girl from concentration camp recognized me. She lived in Boss (ph). And I tell her my story and she said, "Don't worry. We are concentration camp survivors. We can share whatever we have. Come up." And I stayed overnight. She directed me how to go to the unemployment office, the next day, and I went. They asked me, did you work before? I told them, yes. Why did you leave? I said, "I tell you the truth, there's no young people. And I wanted to start a new life. There was nobody for me to associate with." Which was not a lie. But that was not the only reason because eventually I would have left anyhow. But it didn't dawn on me. She asked me to come back, that she's going to check out my story. Because I wasn't used to telephones yet because I didn't have a telephone. And she checked out the story and when I came back, she asked me, "Why did you try to protect her?" And I said, "Listen. I didn't leave, I'm not going to gain anything by making her look bad." You know, my manager from the kitchen. "I just don't have a future there. And I left for this reason, but I also eventually would have left anyhow because there is no life for me." And I told her a little bit, not much, but I told her that I have two friends who stayed there and I want to be with them, can she find a job for me, for them too? And she did find me a job. However, in Sweden was a custom. That you only, if you worked for somebody they provided you with an apartment. You paid for it but if you stopped working you no longer could use that apartment. So I went to work and, when I had already a job for the three of us, and an apartment, I got in touch with my friends and I brought them over. With Regina it didn't work out too well because there was, two is okay, four is okay, three is a little part in our relationship. Because Binna and I, except for underwear, shared everything. Even after we were liberated. It wasn't mine and yours. Money, time, work. She felt better if she did for me, if I did better I did for her. So we were like sisters. Regina wasn't, she was more, she was a nice girl but, like, this is mine, this is yours, and we were not accustom because even in Auschwitz we shared. So we decided that she's going to have for herself a room. So we were on the second floor, _____ was also a little room. So Binna and I shared one room, she shared another room. In Sweden, the custom was the dinner was not in the evening, it was during lunchtime. Since I was brought up in Poland and there was no ready-made foods and everything, so

I was still accustom to do, I knew a little bit how to cook because when I was at home I used to help my _____ and my parents, you know? Chop this and . . . so I knew that my mother tried to teach me everything, what she could, and I would, we would make meals together. And every day somebody would go take turns, one day Binna would go and warm up the food a little early and I did, I had a day when I didn't feel so good she would help. We were really devoted to each other. And one day, I was walking home from work and I was rushing. I was always very fast and energetic. And bingo, I'm on the ground. And I feel that from the elbow, from the back, somebody's helping me up. I turn around. And it was a man. I thanked him and he starts talking to me and he notices that I have an accent. And we start talking and he had an accent too and we found out that we are both survivors of the Holocaust. And he tells me that he lives on the same street, he asked me where I lived, I told him, the same street. But he lives in a hotel and I was, I got a small apartment. He helped me home and he tells me that his father was, not a _____, but you know like a self-made _____, _____. There used to be a lot of people like home-made remedies and he was going to clean up my knees and bandage, I was still, even though I went through Auschwitz, but I still was not the kind of girl that would let him see my knees, you know? So I said, no thank you. And I warmed up the food and offered him some food. And he said it smelled nice and everything, and he said, "Oh, I would gladly pay to have a meal like this." And I said, "I don't run a restaurant. However, if you want to have a home-made meal, during the week we work, I don't have the time, but on Sunday you're welcome. Binna and I is going to be home. You can come up and have dinner with us." His name is in Yiddish, Avrum Schmol-lev-itz (ph), now he called himself Abe. And Avrum Schmol-lev-itz (ph) started to come. I don't know how I should call it, to date me? But he would come constantly visiting. Showed a great interest in me. I liked him very much as a friend. Very loyal, well devoted, caring. But I didn't have any feelings for him otherwise. And he was coming to our home for almost a year. Now, at that time, they sent to Sweden, when we came to Sweden, all the women were there. _____. There were other women from Sweden too, that were survivors. But the men they sent in other places. So there were only two men in our city. So there was no prospect for somebody to find, you know? So everybody, Binna and everybody else is saying, "Itka, you're so lucky. You have a man who likes you so much." And, I don't know, I never talked with him about love because I certainly didn't love him. I loved him as a human being, as a good person, but no otherwise. And I remember that Binna said, "Oh, I would be lucky to find a man like this." And, "Why don't you marry him?" And I said, "You like him, you marry him." Anyhow, I didn't marry him and Avram, in Yiddish we actually called him Avrum because we spoke Yiddish, he received, found out that he has two sisters who live in America, who survived. I don't know where, I don't know too much about those things. And they send him a visa. And I could have gone with him to America but I did not want to go. Because I said, I'm not going to negate myself in any way. If I'm going to marry someone it's going to be somebody who I have deep feelings for. Love not only as a friend but as a _____. And anyhow, one time, Avrum Schmol-lev-itz (ph) comes up to our apartment and he tells me, he invites me to come to his apartment. I got so angry. I said, "After knowing me so long don't you know I'm not the kind of girl that doesn't go to a man's apartment?" You know, we were brought up, you had to be a virgin when you got married, it's not like today, you know? And he said, "Sha-sha, I'm not just inviting you. I'm inviting Binna too and there are going to be other people." And I didn't know at that time yet what's, and I came. And this was either June 24, 1946, yes, it was already 1946. June 26 or, I think it was June the 24th in 1946, and I come to the party and as I come in with Binna, there are lots of guests, and I didn't know that this was the party for his, farewell party, good-bye party, bon voyage party. He was leaving for America. And as I come in a man sits

there and as soon as I look at him and he looks at me, he moves a little bit and makes room and says to me in Polish, "Please sit here." And I sit down next to him, and from the first moment, I care deeply about him. And I started to get worried, what about Binna? And he, I found out later that Avrum Schmol-lev-itz (ph) and this man, and I'll tell you later who he was, knew each other from the same hometown and the man that this man came with was also from the same hometown. From Bell-hot-off (ph), Poland. They're all survivors and they knew each other from home, they went from _____. And found out later that there were even some cousins also between these men. And he, what I found later out, that he knew already that I am not going to get involved with him so he said to his friend, "If she cannot be for me at least let her be for you." Because he considered me to be okay, I don't know what he thought about me, but he wanted me to get a nice man. And the person that I met there was Rockmiel Zygmuntowicz (ph), my husband. And after, and he ask me can he take us home. So I said to him, "You came with your friend. Why don't you invite him too and we'll go together?" Because I wanted for Binna to have somebody, to make _____, you know how _____is, to be the matchmaker. And he said, "Okay." And they want to go upstairs and I said, "No, it's too late. After a certain hour nobody comes to our apartment." So he said, "Promise me that you're going to wait for me." He worked in shifts from morning until 2:00 and from 2:00 to 11:00. That I'm going to wait. He got a job and the other man was _____ _____, which turned out later to be Binna's husband. And he said to come, will we wait for him? And I agreed. Anyhow, I met him a couple of times and _____ _____ started to date Binna too. And one time, Rockmiel (ph) says to me, "Do you know a girl, her name is Manya Mo-nes-ka (ph)?" And I said, "By sight I don't know much about her. I just know she's a pretty girl. That's all I know about her, from sight. Why are you asking?" And he tells me that her brother was with him from where he came from, another city in Sweden, and he asked him to meet his sister. He wanted to make a match. He didn't tell me at the time though that he gave him a letter, he really was trying to make a match. So I said, "Why don't you go?" And Binna kicks me under the table, she said, "Are you crazy? You're going to send a cat for _____. You like him so much and you're going to send him to another girl?" I said. "Yes. If he likes her better, it's better he makes the choice now than later." And she didn't like that so she sent _____. He came back and he said, "Now we can get engaged." So a week later, after I met him, I was engaged. And on July 13, 1946, before Avrum Schmol-lev-itz (ph) left to go to America, we had a double wedding. Binna married Mendal Crook (ph) and I married Rockmiel Zygmuntowicz (ph). That was the happiest and the most tragic day of my life. Happy because obviously I love my husband, we loved each other. But he is the sole survivor of a large family. He was one of seven. Only one sister died before the Holocaust and the rest of his family didn't survive. And I was the sole survivor of my family. At least he had three _____ at his wedding. I didn't have one single person from my hometown. One single person who knew me. My family. And I remembered that when my, when we lived in Check-hon-off (ph), we used to, I mentioned before that we were kosher, so we would buy chickens, ducks, geese. And from the chicken feathers we took to the ritual slaughter and then they would pluck, it wasn't ready-made like here, so all the other feathers they threw away. But from the geese and from the ducks, they would save it. The down. And this was suppose to be for a trousseau, for Yit-cola (ph), when she's going to get married. And whenever they had a wish, they said they should live to see me under the _____, which means under the canopy. And here I was all alone. I had no one. And it hit me. The only person I had is my husband, Binna and _____, who was my dear friend. _____, bless his memory, he is no longer alive, he died several years ago. And at our wedding, I had a borrowed dress. I didn't have anything. We married deliberately during vacation,

the week of vacation, because we didn't have enough money for the next week. And on our honeymoon, we didn't go anyplace and we cooked a big pot of soup. And for a whole week, the four of us shared. This was our condition in the beginning. And yet, I've tried to make a go of it and Binna and I made a switch. I shared with her my apartment and Mandle (ph) and Rockmiel (ph) shared a little apartment when they came from the other city. So Binna went to live where Rockmiel (ph) lived with Mendle (ph) and Mendle (ph) moved in with me and Binna moved out, in that little apartment. You don't understand? I had an apartment where I shared with Binna before I was married. Mendle (ph) and Rockmiel (ph) came from another city and they had a little apartment. So when we got married, so Binna went to live with Mendle (ph), it was her husband. And I lived with Rockmiel (ph). But there is something that, it's a curious thing, because I learn a lot from people. When an engagement we made, I didn't know too many people. So there was only Binna and Mendle (ph), Rockmeil (ph) and I, Avram, and two girls that I met in Boss (ph), that I didn't know from before. One girl tells, who was invited there, Rose Lift-ka (ph) she was called at that time, I don't know what's her, she was married, and she was very anxious to get married. She was a lot older and there wasn't any boys to marry, the girls were worried that they won't find, and not everybody wanted to marry out of their religion. So anyhow, we had a tiny room. All there was in the room is two single beds, a table and a couple of chairs. I didn't even have a stove in the room so we went to going from the steps, to go up to the first floor, I took a little, made a little curtain or drape and I bought a hot plate. And that's how I cooked. And from the sink that we used. But I was satisfied. So I went out to bring in the food. Anyhow, this girl says to me, I introduce my fiancée when we got engaged, and she says to me, "Yit-cola (ph), he's not for you." And I said, "Why?" And she said, "He's too big a flirt." And I think to myself, wait a minute, I only deal with facts. How would she know what he is, she just met him? She would say he's not attractive, she can see, but how can she know he's a flirt? He's never, she never met him before. So I just ignored. After we were married, my husband asked me, "Are you good friends?" And I said, "Just met her." But I had no one else and I wanted somebody to be with us at our engagement. So he said, "Did you know that when you went out to _____, she invited me to come to her apartment without you?" I'm going to cook for you, I'm going to do this. And I thought to myself, you see how important is the thing for yourself. To think what people say and use your own common sense. This is why I'm telling you the story. Anyhow, we were married and eventually my husband was working very hard. And Mendle (ph) told me how hard he's working so I was upset about it so I went and I gave up the job I had, which was that I could have, because, that he should be able to get a better job. And I should get apartment, to get a little bigger apartment. And we were in Sweden and we didn't have anything, we started without anything. But we understood that it's a beginning and we worked hard. And then in 1948, and for a long time I was worried whether I'll be able to bear a child. Because I didn't get the period yet for so long. Finally I got the period. And anyhow, we got an apartment. And you know, I'm telling you those stories because I'm seeing that all over, in every country and in every religion, and even in every home, there can be people who are good or not so good. So anyhow, we had an apartment and this, in this house where I had the apartment from this lady, I had another job, she told me from the beginning that I'm not allowed to have any children in that home, in that place. Because there were only living people without children. Mostly elderly people. And she put in our apartment two beds, single beds. And one time, at night, I hear somebody is opening the door. She came to check if we are sleeping together, and here I am married. And I always, I don't know so much about how I was when I was real young, but as far as I can remember, I was taught to think for myself and to trust myself. And my parents always gave me confidence, you know, that I had that, that I was able to trust myself. So I figured, let her say

what she wants. I didn't argue, I didn't talk back. And it so happen that that's when I got pregnant, in that place. But I knew, as soon as it will be shown she will make me miserable. So again, I had to switch because I didn't want it to have, to worry, and somebody hear, so many of my people were murdered. And here, I had worried for so long, if I'll be able to bear a child. Here I'm pregnant and somebody looking down on me or not permitting me to have a child. I need her permission? So I started to look for an apartment to get, to keep the moving again. Anyhow, when, before, when I moved into another, when I was pregnant I moved to another apartment. And I didn't know anything about how the human body works. A woman's body. And the doctor just told me the date, when to expect. And just told me two things, that I'll have pains, bleeding, then it's time to come. All the time my husband and I was rehearsing. Where we going to go? How we going to go? Everything. It so happened he had still shift work. And he left in the morning and I woke up and my water bag broke but at that time I didn't know that I had a water bag and I didn't know what it was. I just saw it's not something that's, not, that I never had before. So I go in, I don't have a friend, I don't have a family, I don't have anyone that lives near that I can ask. So I go into a neighbor, to ask her, what does that mean? She said, "I don't know. Go ask the doctor." So she's advising me to go ask the doctor. My husband is not home, I don't have a telephone number. And here I see something is not right and I don't know what it is. So I take my bicycle and I'm going on a bicycle to ask the doctor. And here my water bag is broken. And I came to the doctor and they don't let me go home anymore. In the meantime, I'm showing you the different influences, how one thing influences the other. And in the meantime, my husband meets somebody in the street and they ask him, how is Yit-cola (ph), and he told them that I am expecting the baby. And here I was a little bit _____. Anyhow, and this was already after he knew that I went on the bike to the hospital, that the water bag broke. And he tells her the story. So she says, "Well, if the water bag broke and the baby's not born then the baby cannot live." In the meantime, I gave birth to a healthy boy and my husband comes to the hospital and he comes in, I see the uncertainty on his face. He holds his hands behind his back and not a smile, no emotion. I said, "What's going on here?" And I was wondering. No congratulations, no nothing. So distant and cold? I said, that's not my husband. That's not the man I know. And I said to him, "Mistletov, we have a son." And he get so excited and tears are in his eyes, and behind he had a bouquet of flowers but he was afraid to show them because she told him the baby might not live, and he thought maybe it was a mistake. So I'm showing you, why am I telling you this story? I had no experience. I was alone. That when I needed somebody, a mother, I needed relatives to help me, I had nobody. You know? And my son was born October 12, 1948, the same year the State of Israel was born. Two miracles in my life. A son and after 2,000 years I lived to see the dream that my people prayed, the State of Israel. But unfortunately I didn't have relatives to share _____. And ever since I've been liberated, I couldn't even tell you the time because usually I know, that I feel, I told you _____ I want to do something, but I couldn't put it in words. I knew that I had to go back one day to Auschwitz. I never said good-bye to my family. I just knew that something is still not finished yet. Anyhow, and I stayed in there. Then after that I was, started to work, no, the first year we had no choice so we had to take, after my son was about a year, we took him to a nursery because we had nothing. We needed to work and I was suffering tremendously because I was brought up with two loving women at home and a father. And, but I had no choice. And my little boy had an accident. He was accidentally, you know in Sweden we still didn't have the modern conveniences so we had a stove, a wood-burning stove, and I was use from Poland, so we washed the diapers and we boiled them. And I even ironed them. And one day, by accident, and I always caution him don't go to the stove, and the hot water spilled on him. And I thought that I'm going to

lose him so I went with him to the hospital. I come back to the work, and my boss saw, the first day she didn't say anything, and I wanted to stay, this is our little boy, he's _____. And she tells me, "Your personal life is of no concern of mine." I didn't say anything and I thought to myself, I'm free physically. Now I have to be independent financially too. And since my husband had shift and got my child with others, and I started to go to fashion design school. And I'll show you, I have the diploma. And I started to work. And when my second son was born, I no longer had to take him to the nursery. I could be home with him. Now, Binna and I, as I mentioned before, had a double wedding. She was, before I got pregnant she was pregnant and she miscarried. So she got pregnant again. I was early, she was, it turned out that we were, both she and I gave birth in the same hospital. Her first child was born on October 1, 1948. My son was born October 10, 1948. And since in Sweden, so many adjustments. In Europe, we didn't know about formulas. So we used to nurse each others children. We were very close with each other. Anyhow, then in November 29, 1951 my second son was born, _____. And as I said, I no longer needed to go to work outside but it was very, very difficult because I had, I sewed everything, from little suits for the children, to draperies, to slip covers, to custom _____ and I worked very, very hard. But I was happy because I could be home with the family. Then I received information that, from the _____, that we can go to America if we want to. And I decided that I'm going to talk with my husband, find out how he feels. And we both decided. We're going to go to America.

Q: Why did you want to come to America and leave Sweden? Or not go to Israel?

A: They didn't give me a choice to go to Israel. If they would give me a choice I would go. Because they would take care of it, so I had to go again where I was, the reason why I was leaving Sweden is because there was no synagogue. There was, the few Jews that were there, if any, were assimilated. And I felt I survived as a Jew, I suffered as a Jew, I lost my family because we were Jewish. And orthodox or not orthodox, but I want to give my children a Jewish education. A _____ education, not just the secular but a Jewish education too. I wanted to be, for instance, when my son had to be circumcised we had to bring a Rabbi from Stockholm. When we want to have kosher meat we had to send it, by the time it comes after three days its no longer kosher if you know the laws of _____.

Q: But you could have moved to Stockholm?

A: No, we felt there is no, that there, we could have moved, it's not so easy to move. You have to have a job, you have to move, and you have the circumstances. We had nothing, we started with nothing. So we decided, plus, I just felt that too many, you know, in Europe there were too many painful memories. If they would have given me a choice I surely would have gone to Israel and that time, but I didn't have a choice. They assigned me to come Philadelphia, so on February 15, 1953 we arrived to the United States and settled in Philadelphia, and we've lived there ever since. During the time when we came here, I knew that we wanted to have a larger family. And we had to make a choice. And I knew that all life, from the morning you wake up until the time you go to sleep, you make choices. And I was also taught that every, in every choice there are consequences and there are lessons. So I had to put my value system to work. And I said one thing, if I have children I don't want them somebody else to take, I want to be with them. I want to, I didn't have that privilege because it was not of my choice, my mother would have wanted me, because one of the things which I remembered, very distinctly, is that my mother put aside her, she wanted to be an actress but she put away. And the family was always first. And other things which I heard when I was home is that my mother was pregnant but she had a miscarriage and I was very much the child that she wanted so much and I was loved unconditionally by my parents. And I felt I don't want to deprive my children of that. So we decided, my husband and I, as long as we can pay our bills, we'll

forego luxuries. I would never accept a handout from anyone. We worked hard work. And I will stay home with the children _____. And then in 1956, November 24, 1956, our son Samuel was born. Again, I remember that when I was going to go to America people said, where you going to go with a baby? Or the seas, and how are you going to make out? I always had faith. I said, listen, I'm nursing the baby. So at least until I nurse him he's not going to starve. And then somehow its going to work. You cannot have everything mapped out every inch of the way. And we went. It was difficult. I came here. I didn't know a single person in this country. I didn't know a single word of English. Again we had to adjust, to start anew, to make adjustment, to make work. _____, I was already skilled, I was already a fashion designer but my husband had no marketable skills. He was working in a knitting factory making nylon stockings. But he was willing to work and take it, we went from one, it was very hard because he got a job here when we came to Philadelphia, he worked in _____. By the time he came, the _____ the children were asleep. By the time he came home, they were already, they were still asleep, they were already asleep. And I said, no, this won't do. Because I will never put material possessions above spiritual things, which we need. So I encouraged him to change the job. There was an advertisement. After he worked a few days, they just had a few _____, they let him go. So he was taking any kind of job, three, four jobs. But he would never, we never took anything from anyone. And we struggled and then on February 21, 1964 our youngest son, Michael, was born. And I knew that I made the right decision, to stay with the kids at home. Because, first of all, it would cost a fortune, four children you have to camp, and I didn't want to send them to camp because I remembered the beautiful summers that I had in the country, picking mushrooms and my mother showing, making crowns and put on your head, and singing, and I don't want them to miss all this here. I felt that to give them love, because I started to realize that it's the love that I received that I can give to others now. And that you can survive with very little because in Auschwitz I didn't have anything. And after I was married. Anyhow, when my youngest son was suppose to become barmitzvah, we decided instead for making a big party, his name was Michael, may be rest in peace, that we're going to go to Israel instead. And to celebrate his barmitzvah there. And since I'm an intuitive person, and we decided this already, I wake up one morning and I said to my husband, "Honey, let's go now." And he said, "When was this born? Why?" And I said, "I don't know why. I just now feel we should go now." And he agreed. And it was a very good decision. And we went. And for the first time I met my cousin Uta (ph), okay? I was eight years old in 1934 when she left. I came there in 1974, with my youngest son. Ours was always a very close knit family and Uta (ph) was thrilled. We cried in each others arms. Because she was the sole survivor of her family. She always felt bad that she left. She never could come back. And I remembered my grandmother saying, _____. So I was able to go back with my son, to meet my cousin Uta (ph). And there is Israel, there is a country now. And she gave him for his barmitzvah a _____ and a _____. And she asked him, just like my parents called me affectionate, I called my children affectionate, "Michael, what would you like besides this." He said, "Nothing, I'm just happy to see you." She says, "No, tell me." He said, "Okay." He wants a little chain, Michael. And I went to Israel, it didn't take long. I receive a call. My cousin Uta (ph) went to the doctor, her check up, and either on the way there or on the way home, got a heart attack and died. If I wouldn't have gone then, I already told you what I, my intuition and that I listen to my intuition. And I would not have seen her. Anyhow, Michael was a beautiful young man. He was very successful because he was loved and he had a talent to laugh, a full measure. I remember when he was a little boy. He used to ask me, "How come that we don't have family? How come you have a number?" And I told him, and the conversations, I wrote it down and then I made a poem

from it. And I remember that when we moved into our first home, this is my second home in America. He walked over to a neighbor's, his mother, an elderly lady. He said, "Lady, I don't have any grandparents. Would you be my grandmother?" I'm telling you those things, that it effected not only us, it effected the children. And she became like his adopted grandmother. She was very good to him. She lived to be 96. Anyhow, Michael and I, and I remember one time, you know he was more than fifteen years between him and my older son. So he almost grew up like an only child because they were already in college, _____. And one time I was sitting and I felt so lonely and I said, "Michael, I need a little medicine." And I'll never forget his scared look. And he said, "Ma, are you sick?" And I said, "Oh, not that kind of medicine. I need a hug and a kiss." And he came over and gave me a hug and a kiss and after that he would come over many times, he would say, "Want a little medicine?" And that became our _____ between us, medicine meant a hug and a kiss. And when he was already in college, he would always, when I would write to him or call him, I'd say, "Michael, I can't wait to have a little medicine." And he said, "I can't wait to give it to you." And he was very successful because he was loved by many people. He was successful in college. He graduated from the University of Rochester. At age 25 he was already in a wonderful position and he owned his own home and he was successful in every way. He was dating a beautiful girl. And it was, my son Jerry was suppose to graduate in 1990, from University of Cornell. And Michael was here Thursday and he said, "Mom, Dad. Be ready. I'm going to come and pick you up. We're going to go to my brother's graduation." That was Thursday. Friday, the police came and told me that I have no longer a son. My son, Michael, was killed. And instead of a graduation party I had a funeral. He was killed instantly in an automobile. . . [end of side 1 of tape 5] Michael was loved. Hundreds and hundreds of people came to his funeral. Hundreds of trees were planted. He has a garden in Eastside from all the trees that was planted. My cousin, _____, my son is gone, my family is gone. And I always wear this, this is my most precious piece of jewelry. Michael. And in my lifetime, I see the destruction of European jewelry. The _____ and defeat of Nazi Germany. And the rebirth of the State of Israel. I remember one time, Michael and I were very, very close because he was the youngest. And he was the longest home. And he was very, very affectionate and he gave me back what I gave him. And when I lost him I was thinking, at least I was always for him. And his cards, in our home we have a tradition, we write home-made cards. And in each card he said, Mom you were always there for me and you loved me unconditionally. And the kids, when I went now to where they are living, I mean to the World Holocaust Survivors, Michael is no longer with me. He is still with me because he died late. He didn't go with me to the gathering. And now when I went to the March of the Living, and I saw the trees and I was thinking. When I went the first time I went for Michael's barmitzvah. My husband was still a healthy man, now he's not. How many changes in our lives and how quickly, from good fortune to bad fortune, life can change. And how many times, if we don't have a, if we don't say good-bye to the ones we loved. And because of that, I never leave anyone without giving a hug and a kiss, and giving the love and affection. And I feel I did make the right decision, that I gave up everything and was a full-time mother, wife and friend to those who needed me. After Michael started college and I said to myself, when I can close the door and nobody will wait for me and depend on me, then I can start paying back the community. In the 1970's I got involved in speaking on the Holocaust. But before that, I was a volunteer in _____ Hospital in the Mental Health Department. I was going as a volunteer to the Great-a-felt (ph) Prison. I was going on _____. I remembered my grandmother's teaching. Help those who are less fortunate than we are.

Q: Let me ask you a couple of questions.

A: Okay.
Q: Are you okay? Do you want to take a break?
A: No it's okay.
Q: You sure?
A: Yeah.
Q: When you came over here, to this country, was it easy for you to make new friends? And to start again? You had to begin again in Sweden.
A: When I came here, as I said before without wanting to repeat myself, I didn't know one single person in Philadelphia. But when I was still in Sweden, when I came to Sweden, it was the same thing. And I'm going to go back something, to Sweden, because the same thing happened here. It happens to be related. When I was in Sweden, and one time it dawned on me, that if something would happen to me, you know? So alone and everything. Nobody would miss me. If I would die, nobody would, it wouldn't be a loss if people don't know me. And I decided that the most important thing is family and friends. And I made an effort to reach out. I was no longer of being hurt, that I lose somebody, because in life everyone that we love either they will die before us or we will die before them. But not to love is the greatest loss. Not to trust is the greatest loss. When I came here, I didn't know anyone. When I made my son's barmitzvah, the first one, I had over 100 people. And when I make my _____ barmitzvah, I have over 300 people. When I was going to make Michael's barmitzvah, and I start to make the list, we needed 500 people. I don't say everybody was a personal, close friend, but they were people who I was involved. And I said, no, I cannot get involved. I made for my friends already now, I _____ in Israel. I find one thing. That the survivors of the Holocaust here in Philadelphia, we have our, first we were called the Jewish New Americans. Then we changed the name to Holocaust Survivors. We have a common past and a common responsibility. To remember our personal stories. Because for us the Holocaust is both a personal and a collective Jewish tragedy. It's a human tragedy.
Q: Did you find that, certainly as you were getting started here, that it was easier to be close to people who had also undergone the Holocaust? Or did you readily make friends with other people who hadn't been in Europe?
A: First of all, I couldn't make friends with other people until I learned the language. And we formed already 1956, we already had here the organization. So we shared a lot together. And we realized that this cannot be just a social organization. We have to work for Israel. We have to remember the Holocaust and to share with others and to teach. But for me, I had and I still have, all kinds of people. If I would show you my telephone book, you will say how can you keep up? Because I made, I didn't discriminate. I feel one thing, the only criteria that I, that is important to me, is not how much somebody has, who he knows, what he knows, but how much he cares. And when a person is caring, and he is a good, decent human being, than I can be their friend and they can be mine.
Q: Was it easy for you in the early days here? Before you were going around and speaking about the Holocaust? To talk about your experiences?
A: It was difficult then, it's difficult still. However, I don't do only the things which are easy. I do many things which are difficult but they are necessary. And when I was asked, there was here a professor _____, the late _____, I mentioned to you before. And she is from _____. And she wrote a book of the Holocaust and she, once a friend of ours from the organization invited about 20 survivors. I didn't know what the purpose was, it wasn't like a social thing. And I found out that she wanted to organize, that people should speak on the Holocaust. And I went there and that was the first time that different survivors among ourselves started to share

a little feelings. And I realized that there is not, we realized that there is very little in the text books about it.
Q: Actually what I'm trying to understand is, not so much in a formal way, speaking about it, but you had friends from all walks of life, talking in the earlier days here. Was this something that you could talk about? That you could share? Did people want to hear about it?
A: I never went around and volunteered.
Q: Just on a personal basis.
A: Okay, but I mean, what happened was that when people saw the number they start to ask me questions. And I answered. I always, I did the same thing like I did with my children when they asked about sex. Short question, short answer. They asked me so I answered. And people, not too many people were so interested, they didn't know what it is. And then, a little later, when people started to know about it, especially the Holocaust survivors, realized that in the text book there is very little about the Holocaust. They speak about World War One but not about the Holocaust. So we started to form an organization and be involved with this here. So it was difficult. Because, to give you one example, with some people it was easier. Some are more compassionate, some are more understanding and more curious. Others are more involved with their own life. So it depends who it was. I had my late friend told me that someone asked her once about the Holocaust and she started to tell a little bit. She said, "Well, we had that in America hard too. We didn't have any steak." And after that she decided never to talk about the Holocaust to her. The Holocaust has taught me many lessons. Because before the Holocaust I only had positive experiences. I had no frame of reference with which to compare all the blessings that I have. The blessing of a loving family. The blessing of good health. The blessing of having my home. Not to be called all different names. Because I've been called all kinds of names. I've been called no name at all. I've been called, derogatory now, _____ Jewess, which was anti-Semitic name. I was called you refugee. You foreigner. All kinds of name. And I feel one thing, that its very important. Respect for one another. Respect for differences. That we cannot expect everybody to be alike. And that we must, I don't want to use the word must because that sounds dictatorial. It's important to protect our human rights. And just, in the very beginning, with even the smallest incident that's happened. When somebody does not treat you right. I have learned to become a _____. I want to give you an example because that's going to be more. I was invited several years ago to an open house, a barbecue. And the barbecue started because there was some people who were suppose to come from other cities too, it was like a big gathering. They started to come on Friday until Sunday evening. We came Sunday. We live, it wasn't in Philadelphia. And when we arrived, not the owner but one of the guests greeting me with anger. "What's the matter? Why so late?" At that time I realized, I had a chance to sort out my emotions, and I realized that if I answer in anger he is controlling me emotionally. So I looked at him very calmly and I said, "Thank you. I am so glad that you missed me." And he answered, "You know I like you Yit-cola (ph)." And I said, "Thank you" again. This man, may he rest in peace, is no longer alive. He was otherwise a good man, but he had a habit of putting some people down. And I have noticed that volubility illicits aggression in the group, compassion in the kind, and silence in the indifferent. And this is nothing to do with race, color or religion. It has to do with the ability of self image, of confidence, of the ability to love yourself because you cannot love others if you don't love yourself. And to care. To know that what we do effects not only us, it effects others too. Because after the Holocaust, I was thinking many times, you know I told you I like to write, and I was thinking up to age 13 most decisions my parents and grandmother made for me. You know children don't make where to live and what to do, of course I had some. During the Holocaust I couldn't make choices about my life. Even after

the Holocaust. Okay, I could have said no, I don't want to come here. But I didn't have many choices. I could say, I come, I don't come, but I couldn't say I want to go someplace else because the _____ _____. So I felt that so much in my life I had to live and to do by choices which others made that effected me. And I sat down once and I wrote just a few words. And it goes like this:

Four groups of people
Dramatically influence my destiny.
My late, beloved family in Check-hon-off (ph), Poland
Who knew me and loved me and empowered me with positive energy.
Hitler's Nazis who didn't know me
But hated me merely for being born Jewish and in one, single day
Murdered in Auschwitz my entire family.
The bystanders, who knew but didn't care.
And the Swedish Red Cross, who didn't know me but liberated me
From Nazi tyranny and brought me to a hospital in _____, Sweden.
I am one and the same person.
If four different groups of people viewed me differently,
And treated me differently,
I was loved for who I am
And I was hated and starved and tortured for who I am.
The more the Nazis tortured me for who I am
The more I was determined never to become like them,
But to view myself through their eyes.
To the Nazis, I was just a number, sub-human, a vermin.
But I am not a number.
My number is my badge of honor.
Let those responsible for the number feel ashamed, or whatever they want.
I am a proud Jewish daughter.
To be born Jewish is neither a crime nor a disgrace,
But to starve, torture and murder innocent people
For being born Jewish is a crime against God and humanity.
A crime that has influenced the entire world.
Because whatever we choose to say and do
We are becoming partners too.
But others are becoming the beneficiaries of our good deeds
Or the victims of our evil deeds.
We each can make a difference.
One person can save many people
And one person can destroy many people.
Mengelia is responsible for the dead, over 400,000 people.
On the other hand, Wahlenberg and even Shindler is responsible for so many lives.
From the 1,100 Jews that Shindler saved, 6,000 descendents are now alive.
Can you imagine how many would be if the others had survived?
Therefore, I feel that my first responsibility
Is to God
To live by the commandments

And not to transgress them
Because I cannot do evil without becoming evil.
The lessons that my father taught me, whatever I do I become, if I lie I'm going to become a liar and I'll help him and others.
And I know one thing, we live in this world
We are responsible for one another.
But not in a way to punish each other.
So whenever there is injustice and cruelty
We need to be, to speak out, no matter where it is.
And to stand in solidarity with those who are repressed
And not with the oppressor.
In the final analysis, without _____, all _____, religion and education fails.
So we need first to improve ourselves because then we make a better world.

If you wish I can share with you a few of the poems if there is still time.
Q: I have a question. Because you do feel responsible, a sense of responsibility for your world . . .
A: Our world.
Q: Right, but it's the same. Are there certain events, historical events, in the last forty years or so that had a really strong impact on you other than, you've mentioned the birth of the Israeli State. Are there other things that have effected you in this country, like the Civil Rights Movement or wars or anything?
A: Yes. I feel, do you remember there was a _____ who came and he wanted to, here in Philadelphia, to speak in the movies about the Nazis? We went and marched. When there was, we went to speak. Then there was suppose to be a rally here, Nazis wanted to march here. We went to court, I was among them, and we fought against it. When I hear in private life, it doesn't only have to be in big things, in private life, when I was, when I hear that somebody is making a joke or on somebody else's expense, or an ethnic group, generalizations, I stand up and I speak up. I said, "I don't appreciate what you said." In fact, one of my dear friends who is non-Jewish, who I met through such occasion. Because we were in the _____, it was a meeting and somebody said something negative about another group. And I said, "I really don't appreciate because I know how it feels when people do that." So in small thing. You know, prejudice is very easy because you don't have to give accounts for it. You just say it but you don't have to give, you know? And the point is one thing, it's like fire. When there is only one spark, you can erase it. But if there is a big fire, you have no control any longer. So in the little thing and the inter-relationship, in our daily life, in the personal, how we do people. Because usually when a person from one group offends another, sometimes he starts hating or being angry towards the whole group. So its important to respect each other. It's important to speak up when there is a cause, when the Russian people worked, you know, when there was Iron Curtain, and we were fighting to release them, I was marching. So when there is something, a special cause, if I know, if I see something injustice I write a letter, I speak up. That's my contribution. Those are the things which I do. I cannot say, it doesn't bother because it effects. You know, I just wanted to add, the Holocaust effected not just me, because the point is one thing, six million Jewish people and about 5 million non-Jewish people have lost. They will never become what they had the potential of becoming. The world will never know how many wonderful people we have lost. Nor how many Nazi war criminals we have gained. Because some of them still live in hiding _____. So what did the world gain? Lose good people and gained criminals? Whenever there is a crime we lose a good person, we gain

a criminal. What trade-off is that? So it's important. Even to, in my own home, to my own husband, I once told my husband, in sickness and in poverty and in riches and poor and everything, I will always stand by you _____. But you commit a crime and I don't want to be any part of it. Then you have to trade yourself in. So there are certain loyalties. In life we need to make choices. We need to say to bring up decent children we have to learn to say no. Because you know, in the commandments there is the ten commandments. It says you shall, you shall not. And another thing how you can put out, you cannot hatred with hatred, anger with anger. Somebody once said in anger to me, I hate you. Because I wouldn't give in to something that was not moral or ethical. I said, it's okay I love you for both of us. And the person apologized, she said, I really don't hate you it's just that I was angry with you, I couldn't, you are stubborn. I said, what you call stubborn, that stubborn is what saved me from. Because, in fact, I always felt what my family taught me. That no power in the world can break my spirit as long as I don't collaborate with people in my own destruction. Because what we do, this is what we become. You kill you become a killer. You cheat you become a cheat. You save somebody so you, so the final analysis, it's not how much we know or how much we have, how much we care. Caring is what life is all about. And we have a wonderful group in Philadelphia now, that was in the museum last week. They are called Champions of Caring. High School students. And this is sponsored by the Holocaust Museum in the Washington. And by the Jewish Relations Counsel in Philadelphia. And the _____, also in Philadelphia. And those kids, what do they do? They go and help those who are less fortunate. The sick, the elderly, the disabled. This is what we need to do. You know, the strongest message I can give, what I've learned, if we are not our brother's keeper, by omission we become our brother's killers. Because there are sins by omission and sins by commission.

Q: Would you like to read something?

A: Yes. I picked those two poems because, actually there are three poems that I would like to share with you if there is enough time.

Q: We'll see.

A: Okay. The first one is called 'A World That Vanished'.

Q: And when did you write these?

A: This was written May 8, 1978. A long time ago because the Holocaust, I've been living and breathing it, it's effected so deeply my life.

Just like a leaf tossed to the wind
Separated from its branches and tree
Not belonging anymore
Liberated but not free
Carrying the pain of separation
Memories so painful and dear
Memories of our world, it use to be
A world that is no longer here
I still see the Sabbath candles
And my mother's gentle face
My father is chanting the prayers
My grandmother with her white shawl of lace
I see my little sister and brother
So young and so full of cheer
Not yet understanding tragedies and hatred
But sensing uncertainty and fear

The Nazi boots are marching
My world with terror is filled
The Holy Scriptures are burning
Children are starved, tortured and killed
The ghettos are closing us in
What is there for us in store?
My world is going slower and slower
Nothing is like it was before.
The freight trains are taking us on a journey
For most it is the last ride
My brothers and sisters are burning
There is no more place to hide
Hitler's final solution is sealed
We are trapped in a world of Hell
I am amazed that I have survived
The horrors from the Holocaust to tell

And there is another poem, which is called "I Am Not A Number", and I wrote it May 13, 1994.
I was trapped in the killing center of Auschwitz
Surrounded by barbed wires, gas chambers, smoke and flame
The Nazis tattooed a number on my arm
2-5-6-7-3 became my new name
They tried to reduce me to a number
Dehumanize me day by day
But regardless of all their efforts
The could not take my self worth away
They murdered in the gas chambers my entire family
In one single day
All my earthly possessions were so brutally taken away
They treated me worse than a hardened criminal
Even though I did not commit any crime
They hated me merely for being born Jewish
And starved and tortured me all the time.
I was only 13 years old when they took away from me my right to life
But they could not take away my will to live and to survive
For nearly six nightmarish years
I have endured a living Hell
Nevertheless, I have outlived Hitler and the Third Reich
And lived my story to tell

The third one is my conversations with my late son, Michael. When he asked me the first time about the number. And this was written May 14, 1979.
Who wrote on your arm, Mom?
Asked curiously my little boy one day
I looked sadly at my innocent child and thought
Very carefully what to say

The Nazis tattooed this number on my arm
I told my son short and plain
Why did they do it, Mom? He asked further
My God, I thought, how can I explain?
You see my child, there was a man
Adolph Hitler was his name
He was very cruel and hateful
And inflicted on people suffering and pain
Oh, said he, and ran out to play
And I signed with great relief
I wanted to protect him for as long as I could
From knowing my deep sore and grief
He grew and I could not protect him forever
So I answered his questions one at a time
He wanted to know why we Jews are hated
Did we commit some kind of a crime?
No, my child, I told my son,
We have not committed any crime
Yet we Jews have been victimized and slaughtered
By _____, _____ and Hitlers all the time
Do you hate the Nazis for what they did to us?
Now I have no grandparents and relatives like my friends
The Nazi murdered all our loved ones
They have blood on their hands
I know, my child, that you too are hurting
But hatred and revenge can never restore
The lives of those who perished in the Holocaust
And the precious things we had once before
You and I who know what pain is
Must never inflict hurt and pain
We must try to build a better world
So the death of the victims shall not be in vain

This is my message.
Q: Did you talk much about your experiences with your sons?
A: Yes. But I spoke to them, I told them, but I spoke to them more about my experiences before the Holocaust. I wanted them to know their grandparents. Because I felt its important. And as a result, my oldest son _____, a couple of years, two or three years ago and maybe a little longer, came here to visit. He lives in New York. And afterwards he calls me up and he said, "Ma, I had a very traumatic experience." I said, "What's happened?" He said, "I was waiting for the train and I saw a man laying face down across the tracks. And I saw from nearby that the train is coming. I didn't know whether he was drunk, dead, sick, pushed, or wanted to commit suicide. I had no idea. And I was thinking, what should I do? My mind was racing. On the one hand, I risk my life because I didn't know if I'm going to be able, get time to get back. And on the other hand, I thought, what would my grandmother do? My grandmother _____." Because I told him the story how my mother sacrificed herself and me. And he said, "I jumped up and I saved him. People

had to pull me up." My first reaction was, how could you do something like this? And then I said, "_____, when you graduated from Yale University I felt you achieved something special. But this is something more special. You proved that you are a _____ and that is the highest religion, education and achievement. I am very grateful." Another thing, because everything effects, another thing is that when he was little and he was the oldest and he was not born in this country, had also to learn the language and go through the difficulty as a child. I once told him, because he asked me also about my experience. I said, "_____, both your parents are survivors of the Holocaust. We lost everything that was ours. All that we have is our good name. And if you will, I will always love you unconditionally, no matter what you will do because you are my child. But just like I ought to feed you, I ought to feed you spiritually. But there is one thing. You do something morally and ethically wrong, you will not be allowed to have my name." And I completely dismissed it from my mind. When he was an adult already and I came to visit. And all of a sudden, he starts telling me, "You know, Mom? Whenever I was going to do something I asked myself, is this going to disgrace my parents?" And thank God, my son grew up to be a very respectable, loving son, husband, father. He has now a little girl, my grandchild, our grandchild. She is named after my late son, second name. Her name is Elizabeth Michaela. We call her Eliza-la (ph). And she was here shortly before I went on the March of the Living, April 14, 1996. And for the first time, she noticed my number. And she looks at me, she says, she was here Mother's Day. During the time she learned a little more, she grew. And she's playing, busy playing, and she takes a look on my arm and she says, "Barbie, A-B-C's." Because she has a book with A-B-C's and she sensed that this is related. She's only two years old. So it's even effecting her. For me, for my children, even for my grandchildren, it's too late. They will never know the joy of having grandparents and Aunts and Uncle, they didn't know. But hopefully its not going to be too late for others. And I want to finish with a very inspiring story. Remember that I repeated many times that my grandmother's proverb, you only have what you give away. In 1984, I received a letter from a person that I didn't even know. Ida Jervis (ph), _____, Washington. And I opened the letter and I start reading it and it says, I'm your cousin. I'm named after the same great-grandmother, _____ _____. I was four years old when my family left Poland and I'm sure that you will appreciate this. And I'm looking, she send me a photograph of my grandmother and her son. And I thanked her. She invited me to come and visit. Really not knowing what to expect, a survivor, how I'm going to act? Am I going to be reacting normal, am I being all broken up, or whatever. And I came and there was another relative who knew my mother because they were cousins and she left shortly before the war. And she's telling me that every year for many years now, they have a _____ family reunion, because this cousin was _____ and she came with her sister and they started this because people lived in different places. And they invited me to come with my family. We went. From not having any relatives here, all of sudden I had more than 130, 140 relatives. And until this day, whenever we can we go for Thanksgiving reunion. We are close. And my cousins speak with price, my cousin, every occasion, my cousins. They have family. So, because my grandmother send this picture away from Europe, this picture is now returned to me and I realized now I can tell you what you can give away, you still have it. After I lost everything in the Holocaust. My home, my family, my community, my earthly possessions, six years of my life and went through a living Hell. I found out, when I had lost everything material, that I have spiritual things to give. The Nazis hated me but they couldn't stop me from loving people, from believing in God, and from caring and wanting to help. And we certainly have what we give away. We can give up, for over 20 years I've been giving away stories, about the Holocaust, about my family. Many people tell me, I know you because your grandmother

and parents, like they would be mine. And I still can give away. We can give knowledge, a poem, love, compassion. What you are doing, to give away typed, to record this here, it's the spiritual things that nobody can take away. And the result, passing them onto the next generations. The result is passing them onto any person, older, young, stranger or family. When we do that, then long after we are gone they remain. Because Anne Frank wrote a diary. She is gone and her diary is going to live on. And we can always give away kind words and good deeds. No matter how poor or rich we are. How educated or not. And this is what is important. This is the lesson of the Holocaust. Now you understand why I felt it's important to talk about my family. They gave me unconditional love. Showed me, my mother's experience and I, many times when I think, if she could love me so, so much a stranger, how much more did she love me? And that gives me, makes me feel like I'm worthwhile. And this is very important.

Q: Thank you.

A: You're welcome. And thank you for your time and effort.

Conclusion of Interview.