

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Theodora Basch Klayman
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PREFACE

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THEODORA BASCH KLAYMAN

September 24, 2002

Q: Good afternoon, Dora.

A: Good afternoon.

Q: It's nice to see you.

A: It's nice to see you, too.

Q: Dora, what was your name at birth?

A: Teodora Basch. Teodora Rachela Basch.

Q: Teodora – T-e-o or T-h?

A: T-e-o. It got changed much later on when I got American citizenship. Once I came to the States, I got tired of telling everybody that my name was just like Theodora, but without the "h". So, when I got my citizenship, and was asked if I would like to change anything in my name, I said, "Yes, please give me an 'h'." [Laughs.] So, that's how, but I did not change-

Q: So, that's how the "h" came.

A: That's how the "h" came. The Rachela part I kept as is, even though, of course, it's Rachel, but it wasn't important to change, and since I mostly just use my initials, so I didn't change that.

Q: And your name now is?

A: My name now is Theodora Rachela Klayman.

Q: But you use Dora.

A: I have had a variety of nicknames. I use Dora. I noticed that in the pictures during my childhood, that sometimes there is a photograph when I was like six months old that was sent by my mother to my grandparents, and it says, "Tea". So, at one point, I had the nickname Tea from Thea, but I don't remember being called that. Then, in Croatia, Dora is a rather sort of, a name, a very folksy name used usually sort of used for old ladies, and that's not what I was ever called. I was called "Dorica" as a child. So, if we go back now, I'm still called Dorica, and at home, I often was also called "Dorek", and when I came here, I became "Dora", and that's how it's – it's sticking to that one now.

Q: So, no one here calls you Dorica?

A: No, no, just my – my Croatian – well, Lucie sometimes does.

Q: Do you like that?

A: It's very – it's sort of very – it's – its, diminutive names are used a lot in all Slavic countries. So, it's very normal for someone from a Slavic country to use that, but it's really not – it sounds very strange, I think, in English. I know a young woman who lives here who's from Belgrade, and she's called Bekica, and it's Becky, and to me it's like sounds very strange. It's sort of like, you know, Dolly or something like that, and you don't use those names very much.

Q: When were you born?

A: January 31, 1938.

Q: And, you were born-

A: In Zagreb.

Q: In Zagreb?

A: I was born in Zagreb. I was born in Zagreb, apparently. I checked that about two years after my parents were married, and I lived there only the first two and a half, three years of my life. My mother was not originally Zagreb. My father's family lived in Zagreb, and that not for a very long time in history. I mean, they came, I think, when my father was already in his early teens or so. They came mostly from Bosnia. They were not however Sefardi. They had come there from, I think, elsewhere in Europe. And then came to live in Zagreb, and my father's family tended to be cantors. They were very – it was a very religious family, and they studied cantorial music and one of them, one of my uncles, Arnold, was actually a cantor and had studied very seriously. Another uncle, Joseph, also studied seriously. My father, I think, went to Ludbreg, to another little town, to – also to be a cantor at times, and met my mother. So, my mother's family was from a different town. They were from the town, a very small town called Ludbreg; it's further north from Zagreb on the Hungarian border, really very close to Hungary, but that town, in contrast to others, did not have a Hungarian population. I never learned Hungarian. My mother apparently did. My grandfather on my mother's side was the rabbi of that town, Ludbreg. There were some 30 plus Jewish families. I think about, according to some books that I've seen, about 37 Jewish families. And my grandfather, I believe, was invited to come and be a rabbi there, and they came from Czechoslovakia, and he – he came from Bratislava already with his – with the family, and so I don't know exactly how old he was, but from what I gather, most of his writing, he did quite a bit of writing, published, was in German, though he did learn Croatian, spoke in Croatian, but I think all of his writing is in German. I have papers where he wrote by hand and you can see that. Though his publications are in Croatian – I have some of the stuff that he published mostly treatises on the Torah and so on, so I don't know exactly. I've only been told all these

things, and I don't know really if he wrote in German and someone translated, or whether he wrote directly in Croatian.

Q: What was your father's name?

A: My father's name is Salamon – Shlomo, Salamon, and my mother's name was Silva, which is Silvia, of course.

Q: And her maiden name was Deutsch?

A: Deutsch. So, my grandfather, my maternal grandfather was Leopold Deutsch. My grandmother was Katarina, and they had three children. I'm sorry, they had three daughters and a son, four children. The oldest – the oldest daughter was Giza, then Blanka, and then Silva, and the son was Erne.

Q: And Giza plays an important role in your life?

A: Giza plays an important role in my life. Well, Blanka does too in some sense because basically they lived sort of together. The family lived together. It was a small town. Giza was ten years, I'm sorry, fifteen years older than my mother. So, she often was sort of active as my mother's mother in they – I see pictures that they had traveled together, for example, all three sisters to the seashore. The middle sister got married fairly young and had two children, two daughters – Zdenka and Vera. Their name was Appler, and the youngest – the youngest daughter, my mother, was eventually sent to a school in Cakovec which is another small town, much larger town actually than Ludbreg, much closer even to the Hungarian border, and she went there to a teacher's – a teacher's school, became an elementary school teacher. The middle sister who was married, was married to Rudi Appler, who came to Ludbreg, opened a store, and that's – and that's where they had two children. The oldest of the three, Giza, worked in the bank, in the Ludbreg Bank, and there she met a person who was to play a large part in my life and that was Ludva Vrancic. Ljudevit is actually his real name. I'll get back to him. The brother Erne worked in Zagreb, worked early in Zagreb, and I'm not exactly sure what he did there. I think clerical work of some sort. I'm not sure of what he did. And the – my mother eventually finished the teacher's school and worked as a teacher in a small village near Ludbreg for a short period of time. Then my father and she met and married and left to live in Zagreb, and that's how I happened to have been born in Zagreb.

Q: So, let me ask you something, you were a very, very young child when the war came in 1941.

A: Right.

Q: So, what I need you to try to do is to distinguish what you've learned from other people and what you actually remember, because you were so little. So, if you can, as you speak, make that distinction, it might be very helpful. So, this is what my first question is for

you. What is your – do you have any memories before 1941, before you leave Zagreb to go to Ludbreg?

A: Images.

Q: Images?

A: Yes, I have in my head an image of my mother, but it's very hard to really tell because I was fortunate to have a lot of pictures of my parents, which I think a lot of children that lived through the Holocaust never got to have. And so it's very difficult because I've seen those pictures all my life. It's very difficult to really distinguish what's memory and what's a photograph that you have in your head. So, I think I have an image in my head, but I can't really tell you whether I do or don't. I think I have an image of myself leaving on a train, because I left apparently when I was three years old. I left Zagreb with friends of my grandparents and went to Ludbreg, and that happened before, just before, the war started, from what I understand. And, again, I don't have any idea whether – because people often ask me whether I remember whether I was sent away because my parents were afraid of what's going to happen, or whether I was just going to visit my family just to visit my family or whether my mother, who already – my brother had already been born, he was three years younger than I – whether, you know, she said, you know, why not have this kid go away while she has a baby? I have no – no idea why I was sent except there was an opportunity. These neighbors came and I went with them, and I don't remember being tearful or I don't remember the farewell. I don't remember any of that, but that was the last time I saw my parents. I don't remember any farewells. I remember sort of being on the train and there being fun.

Q: It was fun?

A: Mm-hmm.

Q: Was that the first time you were on a train?

A: Oh, I think so, probably. Well, I don't know. It's very hard to tell.

Q: Do you remember the birth of your brother?

A: No.

Q: You don't remember him as this tiny little baby?

A: No. No. I mean, I remember him, however, when I do remember him very well is when he was brought to Ludbreg. That I remember. That I really do remember.

Q: So, were you told about your mother going to school, because clearly you were too young. Your mother wouldn't have explained to you that she was a teacher.

A: No, none of that. I'm just saying the background of what really – of what this family was all about, who was who. I have not the foggiest. No, of course not, because all of that happened before I was born.

Q: What did your father do?

A: My father had apparently learned the trade of brushmaking, and had opened a workshop to make brushes. From what I am told by his surviving brother, he was very good at it, and by the time that I was born, I can tell from, again, from the pictures of him, what people told me, there was a small workshop with, I don't know, ten or so workmen, and there was machinery and they made brushes and was very successful at it. But, I, again, don't have any memory of it. I only know pictures and stories.

Q: Is this difficult for you as an adult person thinking about who were these parents and what you have are paper pictures?

A: It's not actually that difficult. The reason for it is that it was not a new discovery that I made as an adult. If I had known nothing of that, and all of a sudden as an adult it came upon me, yes, of course, it would have been difficult. But I grew up with all of that. It's – it's just part and parcel of my growing up. I always heard stories and always knew who I was and I always had these pictures so that, you know, it's, you know, you just to grow up with stories. That's all.

Q: So, you go to Ludberg-

A: Ludbreg, which actually has a meaning. The word "lud" in Croatian means crazy or mad. This is kind of crazy. And "breg", I think, means a mountain, but it also could be the words got transposed and it was "berg" which means town. So, I don't know. Nobody ever explained why this is called that, but it's Ludbreg.

Q: Do you have a first memory of Ludbreg? Remember arriving? You don't remember -

A: No, I don't remember arriving.

Q: With your grandparents?

A: I remember very well being with my grandparents. That I do remember, and again, I have certain images like I remember sitting with my grandfather in a room and playing at his feet, and he was paralyzed already on one side because he had a stroke. And he was trying to pick up the toys that I was playing with, something like that, and he fell. It was a traumatic experience for me. So, I remember that, and I remember Hanukkah. I remember the-

Q: What happened after he fell?

A: Oh, someone came – he couldn't pick himself up.

Q: You just--

A: I just remember that I was guilty of throwing the toys around or something. So, I remember being upset and crying. So, that's why I remember that. I remember Hanukkah for example, but not the whole thing. I remember candles and I remember getting an orange, which was very exciting. Oranges were not to be had. I remember at Pesach, or before Pesach. I remember that they were burying silverware, and I thought that was a very strange thing to do, but that's apparently what can be done. I found that much later. I had no idea of that. I remember my grandfather sitting in the garden with all of us playing around and he used to -- he used to have his little table in front. This was, mind you, we were living in the house that was attached to the synagogue, and it was also -- and everything -- all the Jewish community matters played themselves out there. So, there was also the school and there were some kind of classrooms, and, of course, that was there much later. It's been destroyed now, but -- so, he would sit in the garden with the little table and he had little piles of money in front of him and there were beggars that were sort of like professional beggars in that town, and they would come Wednesdays and Saturdays because those were market days in Ludbreg, and on Saturdays, of course, he wouldn't do that, but -- that's Shabbat, but on Wednesdays they would sit and they would come and take their little piles.

Q: They, as far as you knew, they were specifically for these particular people?

A: Yes, yes, there was specific people. There was a specific beggar that used to come to our -- to the house where I lived much, much later and he would come every Wednesday and would always get alms, and I remember seeing him later on on the train and being like a normal person, you know? It was very strange, but they were characters. Ludbreg's a very small town, and especially was, and everybody sort of knew everybody and there were all these sort of different routines that were going on.

Q: Since you said there were about 30 families who lived here, how much larger was the town? A couple of hundred families?

A: Yes, and all of these families did not live in Ludbreg proper, either. Some of them were in surrounding villages. Ludbreg is sort of like the county seat, and there were many surrounding villages, and those villages did not have either their own Jewish anything, nor did they have even middle schools. For example, later on when I went to middle school, people, kids from those villages would come to school, and that was also the place where market that was happening, and any kind of official papers were held and so on and so forth. So, it was sort of a -- basically like a county seat. So, anyway, back to the images of my grandfather. Those are the images that I have my grandparents, but of course-

Q: You only mentioned -

A: My grandfather – yes, I know. I remember my grandmother less. I think I remember her more from pictures than I remember anything that went on in the house, strangely enough. No meals, no nothing.

Q: No playing?

A: I don't remember that, no.

Q: Peeling potatoes or something?

A: No, I don't remember any of that.

Q: It's interesting.

A: It's interesting, right.

Q: Maybe you actually spent more time with your grandfather.

A: It's possible. It's possible.

Q: Do you have any recollection of wondering who your parents are after a while?

A: No. I know-

Q: You're there probably the end of March-

A: I'm there visiting. The next memory I have in my grandparents' house, I remember one evening, being lots of commotion, lots of unhappiness, and then, lo and behold, there arrives a baby, and that – a child, a young child. That was my brother. I remember his arrival because he looked very strange. He had lines, like brown lines on his face, and I thought, "What's with the brown lines?" I know now that basically he was crying and there was dirt on the road until they washed him up and so on. I know now what had happened, but I don't have a memory of that. I only know what happened.

Q: So, what did happen?

A: What happened-

Q: What were you told? Your grandparents told you or do you remember?

A: I was constantly surrounded by this extended family. So, there was my grand – there were my grandparents and then only about two blocks away lived the middle sister, my mother's middle sister of the three sisters, Blanka with her husband and two of my cousins Vera and Zdenka, and then there was also Giza, who by that time was also married, and her husband Ludva, the Vrancic family. So, there was constant comings and goings, so that I don't know who said what, and in fact, I remember that evening in

particular when my brother arrived, and then I remember also being sort of distracted later on the next day by my two cousins who took me away. I spent much time with them. So, I was just sort of floating between these families. I don't remember being particularly rooted in one place or another. But, anyway, the reason – what happened with my brother. That must have after the fall of Yugoslavia, April '41. My parents were apparently almost immediately taken into jail, led and my mother had my brother with me. We had – I don't know if it was a housekeeper or somebody who lived nearby, a non-Jewish woman, and she went and was able to get my brother out. So, he was in jail with my parents for a very short period of time. Then she got him out, and she must have phoned Ludbreg, I mean, I know she did because I went through that story before, and they immediately – the oldest sister, Giza and her husband who was not Jewish, Ludva Vrancic, they went immediately to Zagreb and they got my brother, and they brought him back to Ludbreg. And that's – that's what happened that night, and that's – they brought him and he was there. He was nine months old at that time, and so he was crying and carrying on, and that's about what I remember of that. And I remember everybody being nervous and upset and-

Q: You do?

A: I do.

Q: But, nobody sits down and tries to explain to this little girl?

A: No, if they did, I don't remember it. They may have, but I don't remember it. I remember, you know, lots of conversations and things and commotions and then just going off with my cousins to play. I remember being, at one point, that they were pulling me on a sled. So, it must have been winter time by then, and so it must have been later. I don't know when. But, I remember being on a sled and their telling me something about a war.

Q: So, if your brother was nine months old?

A: So, that must have been later than that. Yeah, that image of being on a sled must have been later.

Q: But if your brother was born in January of '45.

A: He was.

Q: War came in April '45. So, it's in the fall.

A: It's in the fall. It must have been in the fall.

Q: November or December.

A: Mm-hmm, which is very likely that in Ludbreg there might be snow already.

Q: September, October?

A: Not September, October, but by November there might be snow. Some snow – so, it might not have been all at the same time, that I have that image from. It's just like the images are often not connected. They kind of live in my head, but they're not necessarily – the chronological order is off.

Q: Of course, I understand, but is that your first recollection of seeing your brother?

A: Yes, yes, it is, and then we were together from then on. We were always together from then on until his death.

Q: Were you glad he was there? Or did it take something away from you when he came?

A: When he came, I don't know whether I paid that much attention. Eventually, it was kind of nice having him around sometimes, but sometimes I was – with time, as he got to be bigger, he played a large role in everybody's life. He was very cute and very smart and I was often very jealous, especially later on, he got to be – he was very personable and both of us were very redhead. This is very muted now. I mean, I was flaming red and so was he, and he was very cute and he had a very good memory. He'd memorize very long poems, and he would stand up and recite them, and I was like, "Ugh, there he goes again." But, the whole town was very fond of him, and he – he somehow acquired a nickname "Lovrek" which wasn't his name, and everybody thought it was his name, but it wasn't.

Q: What does Lovrek mean?

A: Nothing, I don't know how that came about, actually. I have no idea how that came about.

Q: From Zdrav?

A: His name was Zdravko, which is very hard for you I'm sure to pronounce, but it's actually means hime (ph), because *zdravlje* is health. Apparently, my – from what I was told, again, I was told that my mother wanted us to have very Croatian names. People were very, very much into being Croat, and Nationalists, and so on. So, those two names were supposed to be, you know, real Croatian names. We weren't going to have such names as who knows what.

Q: So, Teodora is very Croat?

A: Dorica is.

Q: Dorica?

A: Yes. There is a thing “*Dorica pjeva, zemlja se trese*”, which means “Dorica sings and the earth is shaking”, and I’ve been told a zillion times, every time someone hears my name.

Q: We’re going to stop now and change the tape.

End of Tape #1

Tape #2

- Q: Dora, do you have your first recollection of the effect of a war or something, anything that has to do with this chaos that obviously encumbering Croatia?
- A: Well, I – I have memories that have to do with what must have then been become a persecution, with the issuing of lists, et cetera, et cetera, and you know, historically we know what happened. There were lists, and they, you know, the Ustashe came to Ludbreg and, they – people were being rounded up. I was not aware of that as such, but I do remember people leaving and I remember being left behind, and I didn't know exactly what was happening. Perhaps, again, they told me, but I didn't understand what they were telling me. But, as I mentioned, my Aunt Blanka and her family lived next door to Aunt Giza and Ludjevit, and basically I remember at one point people coming and we were all in one room and they came with satchels or small suitcases in their hands and pillows under their arms and saying goodbye and leaving. And I didn't know exactly what was going on and why were they leaving and who was crying, and I was sad because these were my cousins, but that's the image that I have in my head of their leaving. And I had the sense that it was, there was something that was dangerous and bad and that people were being taken away. I don't have the image of my grandparents leaving. I don't remember that. I remember my cousins. I know that my grandparents were taken at the same time.
- Q: At the same time?
- A: Mm-hmm. Fairly early, they all left. I also know that my cousins, I know that now, that my favorite cousins with whom I stayed quite a bit of time and the middle aunt, Blanka, the middle aunt and her husband, that they had left for awhile and went to the Italian part of the country, that they were someplace in Dalmatia. And then there was a proclamation by Pavelic that people who had left, Jews who had left, should return, and if they return they will be spared, nothing will happen to them, and they stupidly returned. I have a very good friend of mine who still lives in Zagreb now. Her family, which was another family in Ludbreg left also, and had left before this proclamation and they cleverly did not return. They were the only Jewish family, in fact, that returned after the war intact because they were smart enough not to return, actually because the mother in the family said she was absolutely not returning, and so they stayed with the Partisans in Partisan-held territory in Kordun. But, people who returned believing that this was going, you know, that they were going to be okay, they were gone.
- Q: Is it possible that it was – there was a list, and people knew they were supposed to go so they didn't have to be rounded up, they went, yes?
- A: I think somebody must have come and gotten them and had the list, and I – I tried to reconstruct why I wasn't taken, and I hadn't thought about it before even to ask my ____ with whom I eventually grew up, "Why wasn't I taken ever?" Besides having been hidden here and there, which I know I was, because people would warn us that there

would be a raid. I have a feeling that I was not on the list. I had seen one of those lists. One of them is published in a book on Ludbreg, which I have, and it lists Ludbreg Jews, and my aunts are there, and everybody's listed, and I'm not on the list, neither is my brother. I have a feeling that the must have gotten the list maybe from the synagogue, from the community center, and of course, I was not, since I was not born in Ludbreg and I was not considered a, you know, a member of the Ludbreg Jews, I was from Zagreb, I was not on that list. That's a possibility. But the other thing is that I know that many times we were warned that there would be a raid, and perhaps I – if they had been warned, they would have hidden someplace, but I always wondered why in the world were they sitting there? Like sitting ducks. Even I – I mean I didn't have a choice, of course, I was a child – but I'm thinking, "Why in the world were we there?" I recently, my aunt made a tape of her experiences-

Q: This is Magda?

A: Magda, and she was in Zagreb this whole time. They stayed until the bitter end and they could barely escape at that point. I was like, "Why were you there?" You know, it's very hard for me to understand. It's not hard to understand why they didn't – why in some places there was no place to go, but I think in Ludbreg, one of the things about Ludbreg, it was a town that was very close to the – to where the Partisans where. It's at the foot of the mountains, and of course, it was very difficult and Partisans had a very difficult life, but for those of us who were so vulnerable, why we didn't you go someplace into a small village or smaller village. I mean, this was small, but it wasn't really small, not by Croatian standards. Why we stayed there, I don't know. Faith that we would not be wanted? Or something? I don't really know. But I know that often with my Aunt Giza, we would – we would go places. I remember one time going to Varazdin, which is a larger town nearby, and staying with a relative, and I think this was the time that I understood that it was dangerous to stay and that we had to hide for a few days. The other – all the other hiding that I did was sort of nearby with – mostly with friends, and there were a number of families. There was the Ziza, the Runjak family, my brother and I would spend some time with, especially Ludbreg – Ludbreg experienced a lot of fighting. We were really not so much in a concentration camp kind of situation. We were in a war – we were in a war zone. So, when it was – when it was time to hide because the Ustashe took town, then I spent, for example, time with this Runjak family, and they had rented from this other house which was now empty. They had rented that apartment, and we stayed with them. And I called Mrs. Runjak "Mother" when I knew that it was dangerous, and I understood at that point what was dangerous, and my brother called her "Mother" all the time because he wouldn't know how to distinguish from when it was dangerous and when it wasn't. So, I lived with them, and they had three teenage children, and it's thoroughly amazing because I remember Ustashe making camp in our backyard, and we were there, and just pretending that we were part of this other family. And it's amazing sometimes because the whole town essentially knew who we were. That's the most amazing part of all. In a small town like that, everybody knew that we were the rabbi's grandchildren, and at no point did anybody say, "What about these kids?"

Q: So, is there some way in which the town is protecting you?

A: It wasn't organized. Yeah, definitely. It wasn't an organized kind of thing, but a lot of people in that town were really Partisan sympathizers, and I know a number of people who lost, who perished, who lost their lives as Partisans during the war. People across the street lost their one and only son. So, I think -- unwittingly, I mean, not in an organized manner, but it just was not a kind of town that would -- that would say, "Oh, well, go some place else." Or, "You're endangering us." I was endangering some of these people, and -- but, they took us in anyway. So, but, anyway, our bad experiences during the war really had to do with the fighting, which everybody experienced, not just the Jews. Just there was only brother and I and my aunt that were left at the end. Because there were fights especially at night. There would be terrible fights.

Q: In the streets?

A: In the streets, yes.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah, oh yeah. There were -- the street that I lived on was after the war called, "The Street of the 17th *Udarna Brigada*". I don't know how to translate -- Brigade is Brigada, of course. Udarna means -- it's striking, one who can strike well, particularly well. And the reason it's called that is because the members of that brigade, the remnant of that brigade lost their lives. They killed themselves at the end of the battle in a house that was down my street because they were totally surrounded. They had fought all night, and they were totally surrounded, and in the end, they just threw a bomb among themselves because they didn't want to be captured. But there were fights and we would spend -- we spent a lot of time in the basement. We had a cellar, not a basement in an American sense. It was a cellar. We had a vineyard, and we had wine, and there were big barrels down there, and shelves and shelves full of apples that were there for the winter. And at one point, we had beds down there, rollaway beds. And we spent every night there because we knew that there would be bad fighting. Sometimes, but sometimes, we would forget to go down there on time, and -- not forget -- I'm sorry, we didn't know that we should go down there on time. So, then if a fight -- if a battle started, there was no way to get there because you had to get out of the house to get -- to go into the cellar, and so it was too dangerous already to do that. So, we stayed in the house.

Q: Where would you stay?

A: We -- yeah, I remember. That I remember very well. Sometimes the bullets were flying like crazy through the house. There was one night, I won't forget, where the house across the street was a two-story house and ours was a one-story house, and they were shooting from our backyard into that house across the street back and forth. The bullets were flying through our windows, and I was sleeping on the sofa in a corner. So, if you can imagine a corner and then window-window. So, I was fairly well protected, but I was scared to death and I don't have any recollection of where my brother, but my aunt and uncle were sleeping in the room next to my room, and for some strange reason, I think

everybody was kind of paralyzed that no one left there, but there was a window that was – that was right facing out from this bedroom, and I remember crying and asking for somebody to come, and finally my uncle got up and came, and no sooner did he come to comfort me than a bullet landed on the pillow of his bed. He would've been killed if not for the fact that I had been crying. But in the morning sometimes, you looked out the window – I remember one time it was a horrible battle, and we looked – in Croatia you have these – they're not shades in our sense.

Q: Shutters?

A: No, not even shutters. They're more like our Venetian blinds, but they are on the outside and they are wooden, and you pull them up like that, but so, you can also turn them so that you can kind of peer out. I remember peering out, and that is a recollection I definitely have of carriages going by our windows full of dead – nude, dead bodies because they had collected them and then just stripped them of clothes and were taking them someplace.

Q: Were these horse drawn?

A: Horse-drawn.

Q: Like a cart?

A: Horse-drawn carts, yes.

Q: Did you see that often?

A: No, not often. I remember that one very well. We lived on a main – pretty much main street on the corner of two very important main streets so that when things went by, we saw them. And, also, often – well, as these bullets would come through, I mean, after the war, our living room and one of the bedrooms were riddled with bullets, and the – we had these armoires and cabinets of books and they had bullet holes through them, and if you opened the tablecloths, it looked like a doily, you know, all full of beautifully separated.

Q: If you couldn't get into the cellar, would you lie on the floor so that you wouldn't be by a window?

A: Sometimes, yes, and we would sometimes also go into the side of the house that didn't have windows to the street. There was one side of the house into the hallway, except that one night that I remember so well, when we stupidly stayed where we shouldn't have stayed. I think sometimes it was so bad that nobody wanted to move. But most of the time, -- most of the – it's very – it's horrible, I hate to say that, but I remember being quite exhilarated by it all at times. I should have been – instead of being afraid, I used to think it was sort of very exciting to have these battles going on, and thinking it was quite great fun to sleep down in the cellar where there were always some frogs jumping around.

Q: Maybe as a child -

A: As a child, it is so much better. I mean, I'm sure the adults were totally, totally traumatized, but as a child, it's very interesting looking back, and I'm looking now at my granddaughter who is now about the age that I was at the end of the war, and I'm thinking, "Can you imagine what something like that would do to her?" And, yet, when I think of myself at the time, I don't think I was so horribly scared at many of the points. I was more - I think there were some things that were just very scary, like seeing all these bodies going by. And there was a time that - an image that I have very much in my head again, that was another thing that happened in Ludbreg. There were - the Ustashe would take people who were thought to be sympathizers of the Partisans, which they were, many of them, and if they - sometimes they would catch them, some of them were sent to concentration camp and that includes my uncle, but my uncle who eventually married my aunt and he wasn't Jewish. I didn't explain that part, but at any rate, he ended up in concentration camp at one point in Jasenovac, and they would take them either to camp and sometimes they would hang them or kill them in some other way just in town, and I do have a very vivid image of going with one of our cleaning ladies to the main square and I wasn't supposed to see it. She was holding her hand on my eyes, but I saw it. There was a body hanging on every one of the trees around the square, and I remember people saying - they were - because they were Partisans, that's why.

Q: Now, when you saw something like that, and you saw the dead body, was that different for you then when you were in the midst of this fighting?

A: Well, yeah, that - because the fighting was sort of like a "Star War" kind of thing like a game, and I didn't really - I don't think I understood too well at the time what is the result of all this shooting, but I was scared to death when nobody was with me, and I cried a lot. So, there were times when I was very scared. But, we played war so much, you know, when I was a child, that's the game we played. You played - you played with, like I remember playing with dried corn stalks. You would - you know when they were cut off? And they were supposed to be fed to the cows, and we use those to battle each other in play war.

Q: And what kind of war was it? Middle age war or contemporary war?

A: No, no, it was contemporary war.

Q: So, you used guns?

A: These were guns, yes.

Q: And were you Germans and Croatians or what?

A: No, we were not Germans and Croatians. We were Ustashe and Partisans.

Q: Ah-ha!

A: No, we didn't have anything to do with Germans. The Germans – I never saw a German. All during the war, I never saw a German. We had our own Germans, our own Nazis.

Q: What side did you play on?

A: Oh, well, you always wanted to be the Partisans. Somebody had to lose, and somebody had to win.

Q: And did the Partisans win all the time?

A: In our games, yes, in our games, yes.

Q: And how did the games work?

A: Well...

Q: Did you go “bang-bang, you're dead” or what?

A: Yeah, and the boys would usually take the upper hand and the girls would lose.

Q: Was it girls against boys?

A: Sometimes.

Q: Really?

A: Sometimes, sometimes. There was an empty space across the street which belonged to the church, and it was – they just started building it, but they never finished building it. So, it was sort of empty, and you could hide inside there, and that's where we often played our games, and also in our backyard we had sort of a shed. It was built rather than a shed. It was sort of attached to the structure, and in that structure we had a press for pressing grapes to get wine, and that was otherwise pretty empty. That was also a good place to play.

Q: Now, this is not your grandfather's place.

A: No.

Q: This is the neighbor's.

A: No, no, that belonged to the Vrancic family. The Vrancic family had a house that was built by my uncle's father, and they came to Ludbreg when he was – when that father was very young. So, it was in the mid-1800s. They were well educated and very old Croatian family. They count their ancestors to something like the 12th century where there were

two famous Vrancic people. There was the Cardinal, and then there was an inventor, a fairly famous inventor by that name, and then the mother's family was called Svagel, and they were nobility, minor nobility, nevertheless, they had the PL, which is the approval of a _____ in their name, and the silver has that and so on. And they established themselves in this town, and they had a dozen children, none of whom survived who remarried. They all died fairly young, not the children necessarily, some yes, but fairly – sort of as teenagers or young people, and as my memory goes, there were only two survivors and they were already in their fairly old age. One of them was Vika and the other was Ludva, and Vika remained single and died in the middle of the war, and I remember her quite well. Ludva was the person who was extremely well-known in that town. He was – he had been a mayor. He was a organizer of the sports club. He was the organizer of – he was the head of the soccer club even though he never played soccer. He organized everything in that town. He was especially having to do with music. He loved music. He played the violin. He organized two different kinds of orchestras. He was the heart of that town in terms of any kind of cultural life. When he fell in love with my aunt, and he, of course, this was a Croatian Catholic family, and my aunt was the daughter of the rabbi, not exactly the right combination for the times, forever, but certainly not for that time. And he was ten years older than she, and they knew each other especially from the bank because he was a director of a part of another bank, and she worked there. And, again, I know that only from stories. I asked him many times afterwards, "So, why didn't you get married for such a long time?" Because they got married in 1937, I think, or 1939, I'm not too sure. I should know that, but anyway, and he always told me, "Well, she was very happy living with her family, with her parents, and I was fine living with my sister and my mother. There was no need to get married." Well, I rather doubted that was how it was, but that's how he always said it. But I'm sure that my grandparents did not – were not thrilled their daughter going with a Catholic person. However, in all the pictures of the family for a very long time, he's always present. So, it wasn't like he wasn't accepted totally, and I think by the time the war was imminent in Europe, and they knew what was happening, they decided to get married. So, they got married. They actually had to go to Hungary to get married because you couldn't get married in a civil ceremony in Croatia or Yugoslavia, that is, and neither of them was converting to anything. So, they got married in a civil ceremony. So, the house that we basically had lived was the Vrancic house, and then they and my other aunt, the Appler family, decided to build a house of their own, but it was within the same compound, the same land base. So, that's how we ended up having these two houses that were next to one another, and the other one was supposed to be a big two-story house with a store on the bottom for my uncle, a small apartment in the back, which is we ended up living and these people who often hid me lived there, and then there was supposed to be two apartments upstairs, and that never got finished, of course, before the war.

Q: Is this why there's a kind of confusion in you about where you were?

A: Exactly.

Q: Because everything was so close that you can't remember.

A: Exactly, exactly. So, I sort of have memories of Vika living by herself in that big house, in that one house. We were living in an apartment, and I don't know at one point that was.

Q: So, it's confusing?

A: It's very confusing as to where I was living at what time because we did move around, but only within those three houses sort of, and my grandfather, I think, I spent the least time there, and of course, I was the youngest so that I remember that the least, and I remember the Vrancic house the best, because Vika eventually died during the war, and she died I think while my uncle was in concentration camp, and I remember seeing her dead, that was more scary than some of the battles because I ran into the house and nobody told me she was dead and there she was. But then once she died and was buried and we were always in that house from then on, and that's, you know, I remember, that's – we were set then in that house from then on.

Q: We have to change the tape.

End of Tape #2

Tape #3

Q: Do you have any recollection of your Uncle Ludva being taken or going or leaving or not being there?

A: Not being there, very much. Being taken away, no. I must not have been present. But not being there, yes. I remember that Giza was very sad and very upset much of the time. I remember that we were allowed to make packages and send them, and I remember very well that she was making packages. I remember her making sort of vats of this roux. This was what was being sent, roux. And so you – you made this brown mass which would then congeal and solidify, and then he would put – he would use that to put in the water to make sort of a soup.

Q: He was where?

A: He was in Jasenovac. He was Jasenovac, and eventually when he would return – luckily I found out, I mean, he was lucky that he returned, but he saw my father there. So, my father was there for also for quite awhile. He was taken with a number of other non-Jews from Ludbreg, and they were there, I can't remember for how long, but at least a year, I think, and I don't know why, I've forgotten, but certainly I talked to him afterwards, but I don't have a good memory of how long he was there. But I do know all the stories he told me when he returned of how and why he survived, and basically they found out that – well, they knew – that he was a banker, and so they put him to work in an office in Jasenovac to balance their books, to work on the books, and so that he didn't have to be out in the rain and snow and people, there was one person in the office who was an Ustashe but not one of those – not one of those that went around killing people necessarily, and he was reasonably kind to him. In fact, after the war, I have definite memories of Stricek sending packages to him because later on, he was in jail, I mean, yeah, in jail for many years after the war. But this is so – the one thing that saved him was that. The other thing that saved him was that he was always, as I told you, an organizer of things cultural, and they wanted to have, the Ustashe wanted to have entertainment. So, he organized a chorus, and he collected anybody that he knew. So, there were some nieces of his – second niece because he didn't have brothers and sisters, cousins, two cousins' daughters were there – he collected all these people and they created a chorus. So, of course, he claimed to have to practice if they wanted to have a good performance. So, that saved them also from having to work so hard, and they'd sometimes allow them access to some more food. He said my father, on the other hand, worked very hard. Nevertheless, my father survived until the very end.

Q: He did?

A: Yes.

Q: But didn't your father sing? So, how come he didn't get into the chorus?

A: Well, he, yeah, he may have, but that's – I think, in fact, he did, but there were people that they didn't want to – that didn't allow them to be collected because people who were young and strong, they made them work. I think that my – Stricek remembers my father working with bricks, and carrying stones and bricks and things, but he was much, much younger. Stricek at that point, he was born in 1885, he was old, and he had this family of people who were dying with weak lungs at a moment's notice, and he was – he would have never made it. So, anyway, at one point, they released that group and they all came back to Ludbreg.

Q: Now, was that surprising?

A: Yes and no. I was very surprised at that for much of my life until very recently when I was working on the Jasenovac files.

Q: At the Holocaust Museum?

A: Yes, at the Holocaust Museum, and I found out that that was – that was very much a norm, that a lot of people especially those who were not Jews or Serbs, but were Croats who were just thought to be Partisan sympathizers and so on, that they were coming and going. There are many testimonies that I have listened to now, and much material that I had seen, that people would say that they were released, and even Magda, we were talking to Magda. She was saying how people were collected to a camp in Zagreb and they were released to go home and get their clothes or something, and it seems that while they were extremely cruel, within Jasenovac, that they were also very disorganized, and sometimes people would come and go and they were constantly sending people from one place to another. I believe that was the most amazing thing that I found in reading the Jasenovac material, to what extent people were constantly being moved from Radiska to Jasenovac to Lepoglava, spending times on trains going back and forth, sometimes being released. It's amazing, and we haven't quite figured out. Lucie and I are both very surprised, and we haven't quite figured out what is the basis of that except that we feel that there was not a total organization.

Q: Now, did your uncle come back before Giza was deported?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: They were able to spend some time together.

A: Spend some time together, but then I don't know why he wasn't – I don't know where exactly he was physically when somebody – when somebody came to get her. She was apparently denounced. As I told you, that whole town was very good about not denouncing anybody, but there was one person, and Stricek knew who that was, and I wish for history's sake that I could remember his name now, but I can't, who denounced her, and they came and got her. Somebody did warn her. I think she hid in the attic of that unfinished house, but they found her.

Q: She was denounced as what? As a sympathizer?

A: As a Jew.

Q: As a Jew? But wouldn't she have been listed as a Jew?

A: She was, but people weren't paying that much attention to that. She's on the list because the picture I have of the list, she's on it.

Q: They weren't doing very much with it?

A: No, they weren't doing anything, but at that moment, I don't know whether it was a particular person, a particular person who was in charge, even – it was towards the end, they were already losing the war.

Q: This was late, this was 1944?

A: It was very late, 1944, right. It was very, very late, and then Stricek tried to go after her. He did go after her. He followed her and went all the way to the border and tried desperately to get her out, and was unable to get her out. We think that she was shipped to Auschwitz, but we don't know exactly. We never found any records, and that was the end of her, unfortunately.

Q: When he came back, did you stay with him?

A: Yeah, I stayed with him. I stayed with him. That was pretty much already almost the end of the war. And...

Q: But your brother's with you the whole time?

A: Yes, my brother's with me all the time. And, then came liberation.

Q: Let me ask you something. You're now a little bit older. You're like five.

A: Right.

Q: In 1944. So, as people are leaving and Giza is clearly an important person to you, you have some sense of who she is, her disappearance, does that...?

A: That was very upsetting.

Q: Does that bother you in a way that the others would not because you were so little?

A: Yeah, they all bothered me that they would be going away. I just didn't know how going away, you know, what – you know, you go away, you come back. I think with her, I

already had a sense that perhaps she won't come back, that bad things were going on, that people die. I think at that point, I-

Q: Do you think you understood what death was?

A: I think, well, yeah, I've seen – I saw a lot of death since then, all the battles, all the dead people. You know, living nights – oh, I didn't tell you about one night when there was a big battle and the big mill which was just a little bit more than a block from us was set on fire by the Partisans. That was awful. People crying because – all over the street – because everything, all the wheat or corn, whatever they had that was to sustain them for the year was in the mill ready to be milled and it all burned down. The smell in the town for a long time, the smell hung around of this burnt stuff, and people who were, you know, I, at the point, I understood – I understood what it means to die, or to be dead. So, I remember being upset, and I remember Stricek being very upset for a long time afterwards.

Q: Did he say anything to you? Does he tell you that he has tried to find her?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: He did. At that time?

A: I think so, Again, you know, do I remember it then, or do I remember it a year later or in 1956? It is very hard to tell, but I think I had the sense of what was going on.

Q: Was he a loving person to you?

A: Very, very, he was one of the sweetest people that you could imagine. Not only to me, he was Stricek, which is diminutive [sic] for uncle, to the entire town, and because I called him that, everybody called him that. He is referred to as Stricek Ludva by everybody, and there is – there is a monograph, well, there is a history of Ludbreg published by a Mrs. Winter, and it came out about two years ago, and there are sections on a variety of topics including Jews of Croatia, oh, Jews of Ludbreg, but there is a few people have their own chapter, and there is a chapter on him with pictures, and it's *Nas Stricek Ludva*, which means "Our Uncle Ludva", that's what he was. Our house was always open and full of people and company and he was – he was – he was the most loving person you could imagine. I was extremely lucky, extremely lucky.

Q: Was Giza like that, too?

A: She was much quieter. He was, you know-

Q: He was the social one.

A: He was the social one, yeah. She was much quieter, and, of course, she – I only knew her in really bad times, where I knew him afterwards, after the war, when his true self came

forth, you know? So, it's interesting because one of the things that this Mrs. Winters says, she says, "All the good things...", she was, by the way, very famous, a very well-known person in the Partisans during the war, and she considered herself a historian, and I am sorry, very sorry that she died before I could talk to her because she writes very nice things including about him, including the fact that he adopted me and my brother after the war, and then she says things like, in one sentence she says that even that was not, that he lost so much during the war, and then in the end he even lost me because I married this in quotes: "rich Jew", which made me just wrinkle because my husband was anything but rich, and that I left and left him there, which of course wasn't the case. Yes, I left, but very much with his – with his approval, and he knew he was quite elderly and he knew that he wanted me to have as good a life as I possibly could. And he did everything in his life to make my life as good as possible.

Q: So, do you remember liberation as liberation?

A: Yes, yes, I do.

Q: What was it like?

A: What I remember most is columns and columns of Ustashe being marched through the town and being taken who knows where, and all of us standing outside and looking at these people and these forced marches that they were on. I don't know where they were going and to where they were going, and there wasn't anybody that knew, but everybody sort of standing around and these people were hungry and they were thirsty and here and there people gave them a little water, but other than that, people just stared as they were walking by, and so all of a sudden the tables were reversed and everybody was saying, "They deserve it." And that is what I remember most is this, you know, the conquered people walking by.

Q: Were they yelling at them?

A: I don't remember yelling. I think, in fact, there was quite a lot of silence, sort of, we were just staring at them. There were huge number, there were thousands of people being marched by, what looked to me like thousands.

Q: Were they going north? Do you have any recollection?

A: They were going – I remember which way they were going in Ludbreg, and they were going east.

Q: East?

A: East. So, because I mean, we were between – Ludbreg is between two larger towns, Koprivnica and Varazdin, and Varazdin's to the west, and Koprivnica to the east, and they were going across the bridge, across the river toward Koprivnica. What happened after that, I don't know, but you know, that was --

Q: But, you knew from your war games at the very least-

A: Yes.

Q: Who was the enemy and who wasn't.

A: Oh, boy did we know who was the enemy all of the time, yes. We knew who the enemy was. We were free when the Partisans were there. You know, I didn't have to pretend. At anytime that the Ustashe were in charge of the town, I had to – well, I had this red hair, flaming red hair. I was extremely noticeable because there isn't a Croat almost anywhere with red hair.

Q: Only Jewish Croats?

A: Yes, I did not know any red heads, and so there was a time that Pavelic came to town. I think it was towards the end sometime, I don't know exactly why he was invited – he was a speaker. Well, all my friends were going. I wanted to go too, to see, and I was told absolutely not, and I remember that I was told I could look – we had a stone fence, and I could look across the stone fence, peer out. It was in the summertime I think, but I had to wear a hat on my head because you don't want any strangers not noticing you with this red hair, and my brother also had red hair.

Q: I was going to ask you if he had red hair.

A: Yes, the two of us had red hair, and we kept waiting for someone in the family to have red hair, but my grandson has slightly reddish, but it's my – the males in my family seem to have red beards, but I'm the only redhead female so far.

Q: It was really flaming red?

A: Yeah, very red hair yeah. So, that was a real liability, and peasant women would come into town and tell me horrible stories. I remember one telling me, one time – I don't know if it was during the war or not, but I remember she told me, "If you ever go to Varazdin", the bigger town, "be very", or Zagreb, my goodness, "be very careful not to go near any kind of a place where there is a pharmacy because, you know, they might catch you and press you and make medicine out of you." You know, there were – in the small towns, these kind of prejudices and misinformation are rampant. So, I knew that my red hair was some kind of a liability and I was to hide it all times, and I hated it, too.

Q: You didn't like it?

A: I did not like it at all. I just hated it. I felt like, "Okay, so maybe I'm redhead because I'm Jewish, I'm different." And, I didn't like being Jewish. I mean, it was a liability, and anyway, at that point, I really didn't know that Jewish was anyway.

Q: But, you knew Jewish was bad in terms of the Ustashe, not in terms of being Croatian, or could you not make that distinction?

A: I don't think I could make that distinction. Again, you know, I knew that this was something that they could catch me for and I would be in trouble, but no one told me, you know, no one told me why it was bad being Jewish, or why it was – or maybe if they told me I did not understand or I didn't understand, but I just knew that nobody ever said bad things to me about it. No one said, "Oh, you're a Jew, therefore" or "it's bad." I mean I knew from being in school, we had to go to churches in school. I just started school. I was, really, in first grade before the war, and we had to go to church on Sunday and we would line up and go to church, and I knew that I didn't know some of their songs. I was inventing. I remember inventing songs. They would be singing something like, and I knew the melodies but I sometimes didn't know the words, and I would be inventing something about birds singing or something. But, you know, I lived across from the church, and I'd go there with my friends. And I knew very – I knew very early that Jews – that there were Jews who killed Jesus, and that that was bad, and I didn't want to be part of that. But that's what I knew, and I didn't have any idea after the war what Jewish was, but of course, after the war, it didn't matter because nobody followed any religion after the war.

Q: Were you asked or trained in some way to be a little Catholic girl so that in case-

A: Mm-hmm.

Q: So, did you go to catechism?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: You did?

A: Mm-hmm, but we had it in school. We had it in school the first year that I was in school, we had catechism in school, which is interesting because before the war, there was – there was – religion was taught apparently in schools, and I have this picture of my grandfather teaching Jewish children, and then there was – there was a Russian – there was an Orthodox priest teaching whatever. There were Orthodox children, there were Serbian children, and then there was the Catholic priest, but of course, during the war there was only Catholic, but I don't remember so much any priests. Somehow I've don't – but, I – I do remember the book of catechism in school. I don't remember who was teaching it.

Q: Was this after Giza was taken?

A: That I can't tell. That I can't remember.

Q: Do you think it was when you were five years old or six?

- A: It must have been at the same time. I did not go to school at five. In Croatia, in Yugoslavia, you didn't go to school until you were seven, and they smuggled me into school early. I don't know why. I think my uncle felt like, "What are you doing here? She's already starting to read, let her to go to school." And because of his position in town, or their position in town, and we were friends with all the teachers, they just let me go. I was the youngest as it is even when I finished school later on. I was the youngest, yeah.
- Q: Did you like church?
- A: I liked church because it was sort of like, there was music and pomp and circumstance, you know, there, you know, you got dressed up and there were holidays, but I don't know so much, I mean, you know, because I remember girls having to get dressed up and you would go in a procession and throwing rose petals around.
- Q: Now, did you go to synagogue when you're at grandfather's? Do you remember?
- A: No.
- Q: No synagogue.
- A: I don't remember.
- Q: Right, so, your physical experience with religion is Catholicism.
- A: Yes, as a child, yes.
- Q: You know that you're Jewish, but it's not your experience.
- A: Right. That was not my experience until I was 16 years old, but, of course, I had no experience with any, you know, and I knew who – I mean, I knew who I was because I had my own – my grandfather's books were saved. Again, I don't know exactly who must have been Ludva Vrancic's teacher who somehow facilitated for the books, the main books, to be taken out of the synagogue that my grandfather built, lived, and being brought to the Vrancic household and being put in the attic. So, that is how I end up having a lot of my grandfather's books, not my grandfather's, but the synagogue's books, some of my grandfather's books. So, they were all stored there. So, I knew, you know, what Hebrew looked like, and that, but that was the language that was used. I have pictures of my grandfather, you know, wearing different kind of clothes. I remember things like my Aunt Giza when one time when we escaped together, because there was going to be a raid and we went to another town to the town of Varazdin, and I remember that she wasn't going to eat in that house. I used to eat, but she opened a can of sardines. I remember that so well. I don't know why. I remember her can of sardines. So, she was obviously keeping kosher.
- Q: Kosher. In some way.

A: Yeah. But, you know, I was, you know, I was eating everything everywhere. When I think about eating, the thing that I remember the best is when I was staying with the Runjak family, sometimes when the Ustashe were there, and we stayed – Mr. Runjak was a painter. I don't mean art. I mean walls. And she was a nurse. She took care of cataracts. Everybody seemed to have cataracts, not cataracts, I'm sorry, trachoma. There was a lot of trachoma, and she was-

Q: What's that?

A: It's – trachoma is a, I think it's also the word in English, but it's a disease of the eye.

Q: Glucoma?

A: No, no, not glaucoma. We have to look that up, but I think it's trachoma, and I think it's – it's a transmittable disease and a lot of peasants had it, and she was – she had a little clinic of sorts that she ran and they all came to her for her to take care of the eyes, but there was very little money in that family. I mean, there were three, you know, three teenage kids. I think one, or maybe two of them still survive and I see them when I go back, and so, food was precious, right? Though I was never hungry, really hungry at all. That comes from living in the village where everybody had land and chickens and things, but I remember that Mr. Runjak because he was going to work, he could have scrambled eggs for breakfast, and we all had to take turns, who was going to get the empty pan and a piece of bread to eat – to rub the bread in the fat and eat it, or maybe have a crumb or two of the egg left. I remember that very well.

Q: Okay why don't we stop the tape?

End of Tape #3

Tape #4

Q: When there was liberation, were you expecting Giza to come back?

A: People were – I don't know what I expected, but everybody kept asking me this question. Like, you would be on the street, and some stranger would come and say, "Are you expecting your mother and father to come back?" Lots of people asked me that question, and not only at the time of liberation, but much later on, and people would concoct stories, you know, and say, well, they heard so-and-so was in Russia for such-and-such a time, and they returned, and am I expected somebody to come back? And I may have expected somebody to come back, but not terribly actively. Some people, of course, came back. Two of my uncles returned, but of all the family, that's all.

Q: And did they want to adopt you?

A: Yes, they came to Ludbreg looking for me, looking to – not just for me; looking to see who was there, who survived of my mother's family. One of them was my mother's brother. He's the only one actually of the entire Deutsch family who survived. On my father's side of the family, a few siblings survived, half of them. And this uncle, my Uncle Bernard, who goes now by Dov and lives in Israel, he survived because he was prisoner of war. He remained – he was in the Yugoslav Army, and became prisoner – actually, Erne was also prisoner of war. They both were in the army. They became prisoners of war, and so survived. It was a much easier survival from what – I just spoke to Bernard very recently and he was telling me stories, how they basically lived the same way like the rest of the prisoners of war, and they were able to get packages and they were fed reasonably decently, et cetera, et cetera. So, the two of them returned. Both of them asked me to go with them, and I absolutely refused. When I think about, at the age of seven, I was totally aghast that I would go with these people whom I didn't know. And my Uncle Bernard, Dov, got married to another survivor, this survivor of the camps, to Estie (ph), she survived Auschwitz. They left Yugoslavia, and went to France, to the south of France, and then eventually to Israel where they still live. My other uncle, Erne, got remarried. His wife, Irma (ph), and daughter, Edita (ph), were killed. By the way, that's one of my really vivid memories – his daughter was at one point released from a concentration camp, and I remember her coming to my grandfather's house and being totally skin and bones, full of lice, and I remember that she looked weird, and they put tar on her head, and she just looked so crazy to me. And I was, obviously, a little girl, and again, she then continued to live in Ludbreg and not in total and absolute Anne Frank-style hiding, and then she was taken away again. But, anyway, she then was taken away and was killed. But he remarried, Erne remarried, and married a woman who became a widow and had two children, and they eventually left for Israel, and I remained behind. I think that from the date of the adoption – I was adopted by my uncle, and my brother also, almost immediately after the war in '46.

Q: This is before the came – before the brother-

A: I have a feeling that it was before they came, and so, you know, there was a great tug of war, and I never heard from either for a very long time. I think they were very angry and upset.

Q: Now, were they angry at you? They were angry at-

A: Well, they were angry at my uncle, but it – it manifested itself with the fact that I never heard from them again. However, the person that I did hear from eventually, but I don't remember how soon after the war, I heard from another uncle who survived, another of my father's brothers. So, in my father's family, there were six children, and one sister and two brothers survived, and this one brother was in Bergen-Belsen and then was rescued out of Bergen-Belsen and went to Switzerland, and he married Magda, and they had one child a seven-year-old child or so when I heard from them. So, maybe he was – maybe he was about five, six at the time. So, it must have been, I think that child was born sort of '45, '46. So, I heard sort of into the '50s more or less continually from them, and remember very vividly getting a package from them, a ball point pen where you could see through the plastic. That was so exciting, and a red plastic little purse like that, and a box of Frigor chocolates, my box of Frigor chocolates, very exciting.

Q: Frigor?

A: Frigor, the Swiss brand. They were living in Switzerland. Of course, we had no – after the war we had so little, and we, as a family, had more. I mean Stricek and I and my brother, had more than many families. But, anyway, this whole chocolates and stuff came much later. It came after my brother was no longer in the house.

Q: Let's talk a little bit just about this tragedy with-

A: With my brother?

Q: With your brother.

A: Now, there we were having survived the war, and it was September and everything was going fine, and it was time to go and have – and collect grapes, have a grape harvest, and we were at the grape harvest, and the day after my brother was sick, and it just seemed to be sick like children get sick. And then his temperature went up and up and up, and then it turned out that two other children in town apparently had scarlet fever, and it turned out it was scarlet fever, but it really wasn't diagnosed in time, and – in time for the doctor to say, "Go to the nearest town," which was 25 kilometers from us, or "Let's go get penicillin someplace," and apparently he had a weak heart, and he was sick for three days and he died. It was quite a tragedy. It was a tragedy for me, even then, and I was old enough to realize it, I don't think I was nearly as affected as Stricek was. I don't think he ever got over his death. He just adored that child. He adored me, too, but I think he really adored my brother. And I was – the whole town mourned. It was really sad.

Q: Really?

- A: Yeah. It was very sad. It was just, you know, I think scarlet fever is a bad disease even now, and at that time I think there was just no – we had no antibiotics. It was right after the war, and nobody was alert enough to realize that you could die that fast from something like that, you know? You just go, “Oh, the kid is sick. He has a high fever.” So, it was bad. It was tragic. So, after that, I was an only child, and with not a single blood relative remaining within Yugoslavia. So-
- Q: Did you feel almost like Ludva was as good as a blood relative?
- A: Oh, yeah. I never – no, I’m only making a statement, a general statement, but it wasn’t that I felt that he was any different than a blood relative. I really felt like he was my father. And the only time that I used to think how sad it was that I didn’t have my parents, and I know that sounds terrible because people often ask me that, you know, “How did you feel about your parents?” but, because I didn’t know them, and I didn’t have that experience, it was only theoretically that I missed my parents. Aunt Magda gets very upset when I say that.
- Q: It makes perfect sense.
- A: It makes sense. The only time that I would, you know, feel sorry for myself, was when something would happen that I would get punished for something, and then I would say, “If my mother were alive she wouldn’t do XYZ,” you know, like I don’t know. If we had succession of cleaning ladies and housekeepers. We had some very nice housekeepers, some people who were very nice to me. But if I would get punished or had to clean my room or whatever I had to do, I would say, “If my mother was alive, I wouldn’t have to be doing this.” Of course, I would have.
- Q: Yes, would you say that out loud?
- A: No, but I would think that to myself, feeling sorry for myself.
- Q: Now, you said at some point this afternoon, that your father actually survived the war. Is that the case? Or up to the end of the war?
- A: From what I was told by people – a person who apparently witnessed my father’s death, is that at the end – at the end of Jasenovac, there were many outbreaks. There was a major one at one point. I keep reading about that in all the records. But, apparently, there was confusion and they were killing people en masse and so, people were trying to escape and there was – it seems that my father and a few other people escaped at the very end, and that they went someplace into the woods, and then came down – came close to a village looking for the food, and that they were surprised by a German, I think, German patrol, or Ustashe patrol, I’m not sure. And, then he was shot. So, that’s the most unfortunate, that he was able to survive until the very end, and then not make it.

Q: This is going to sound like an odd question, but do you think that if your parents had come back, you would have felt about them the way that you did about the two brothers who came? Just like, “Who are you?”

A: Possibly, but I think I understood parents. I understood -

Q: You understood?

A: Yeah, I understood the concept. I understood that, and I think Stricek would have understood and would have – would have given me away. Yeah, given me away, I mean, he could have kept me. You know, I was, to him, basically a grandchild because my aunt – my aunt, who was his wife, as I said, was 15 years older, then he was 10 years older than my aunt. So, there was a 25 year gap.

Q: Between your parents and him?

A: Yeah.

Q: So, how old do you think he was at the end of the war?

A: So, he was born in 1885. I’m very bad at math.

Q: So, he’s 45 or 50?

A: In his 50s, right, and so – oh, when did I feel sorry for myself for not have had my parents? For example, he was fairly strict. When I was a very little child, I could do anything. I could climb walls if I wanted to, but as I got older and older, then restrictions remained, you know. I had to be careful about this and that, and boys and so on, and then I was always – I would always say, “Well, you see, he’s so old, he doesn’t understand anything. If I had younger parents, they would have understood.” Nonsense, of course, but, you know, that’s – it’s a good way of looking at it. So, I always used to say, “I’m going to have my children very young so that I’ll understand them better.” We’d have to ask my children how I did. I did have my children very young, but I don’t think that that was necessarily what happened, but I always worried about him getting married, for example.

Q: And what would happen?

A: And what would happen, and there was some possibilities. We had some very appropriate housekeepers at times.

Q: What did you think would happen? That they would not want you there?

A: No, no, no, I didn’t think that. I was just jealous.

Q: You liked having him to yourself?

A: Oh, yes, you know, I was in charge.

Q: When you think back now, does it surprise you that someone who is 55 years old would want to adopt a little girl?

A: Well, I don't -

Q: Or, was he just very special?

A: He was just very special. I – I don't think, I've never thought about it in that way. Of course, if I think now, I find a 55 – I mean, I remained a widow at the age of 54. That's about the same age, and I certainly wouldn't think about starting at this point to adopt a child. So, I can imagine that age very much, but I think I was there all along. It was just, you know, it was just a paper thing. It wasn't a – it was just continuing status quo rather than creating something new.

Q: Clearly, he loved Giza so much and the family, that there was no way that he was going to abandon you.

A: No.

Q: Or your brother.

A: No, no, no, I was just part of them.

Q: And, he – from your description, he was such a social person -

A: Right, right.

Q: That privacy was not the big issue for him.

A: Oh, it wasn't an issue at all. There was no privacy in that house. No, there was somebody there from morning, noon 'til night, there were always people in the house, and there was always something being served. And people were always visiting. So, that wasn't an issue.

Q: Did he tell you about your parents, what he remembered about them?

A: He told me, but he didn't know my parents all that well.

Q: He didn't?

A: No, I mean, he knew – he knew my mother, but he barely knew my father, because my parents were married about two years or so when I was born, and my father never lived in Ludbreg, and Stricek never lived in Zagreb. So, I mean, you know it was – he knew my

mother as a young woman growing up, and she was away at school, of course, because there was, you know, in Ludbreg, there were only eight grades of school, and so, my mother already was sent to Cakovec to go to school at the age of 13 or 14, whenever it was. So, I'm sure he didn't know her all that well to be able to tell me very much about her. I mean, there were always things he told me. I mean, music was extremely important to him. I was always told I needed to study music, and my mother sang very well apparently. So, that was always told me. I was always told that she was very good with languages, which I inherited somehow and also I could sing, so that was always, "That's what you have from your mother." Well, both my parents. My mother lived in Cakovec for a bit of time, and apparently learned Hungarian while she was there, just as a side thing. So, it was a big thing, you know. To study languages was very important, and I was always given all the opportunities, but, you know, I was given a lot of opportunities and I was aware of that because we lived surrounded by in this world of farms and farming families, and there were very few so-called "intellectuals" families in town, and you know, I was one of those, and I had more than most people, and I was made aware, you know, of, you know, *noblesse oblige*, and I had to behave well, and I was told I had to learn how to do things in the house, so that I can tell maids what to do, those kinds of things. So, I knew I sort of lived in sort of semi-privileged world, and I enjoyed it all. I liked to learn, and I, you know, there were books everywhere, and for fun I was reading Dante's *Trilogy*. I love to look at the pictures of the *Inferno*.

Q: It must have reminded you of the war?

A: Yeah. [Laughs.]

Q: How does he earn a living?

A: He was back to being a bank director.

Q: Oh, he was. So, he was doing very well?

A: Yeah. Well, you know, in that world, comparatively. Yes, we – we still had, of course, our house, and then we were – there were – he was constantly working on getting some of the other things back, like the vineyard was left to us, but, of course, that was always an outlay of money, because we had to pay somebody to work it and then nobody ever sold anything practically. We only sold wood – there was a little forest and we could sell wood and gravel, and then there was stuff in the house that we were able to sell. There was jewelry left from before the war, and slowly we sold quite a bit of that. I have a very vivid memory of taking some chains which I liked very much, gold chains, and having to – somebody came and put them on the scale, and that was the money. But, that is how – oh, and there were clothes from his sisters and so on that we slowly sold, and extra furniture, and we traded for things like potatoes and whatever, you know, else we needed to live.

Q: What happened in terms of religion? Was he an observant Catholic?

A: No.

Q: Nothing.

A: No. He was not an observant Catholic, but I don't remember him ever going to church. There was sometimes things that we did do in the house. I remember that we did have a Christmas tree, mainly because the maids or the housekeepers or whoever they were put one up, and I would, of course, couldn't help but love it, and I'd get presents. And, the only other thing that I have a memory of besides that holiday, was that the day – Three Kings Day, whatever it's called now. You know, it's the last day of Christmas, after Christmas. The custom in Ludbreg was for the priest to come through the houses and do -

Q: Bless?

A: Yeah, bless the house and put some chalk marks, I think, I think, of the saints or something like that on the – and, of course, Stricek, who was very welcoming of everybody, allowed the priest to come, too. So, the priest came. We sat down. We had a good talk, and religion at that time was so frowned upon. No one went to church anymore, and that priest was sort of, you know, he didn't push it. That was the only thing that happened.

Q: And, what happened to you knowing that you were at least born Jewish? There are very few Jews left in Yugoslavia.

A: There was this one family that returned, the Weinrebe family, whom I adored and they were Stricek's best friends. But they didn't do anything either, and so, I just knew that they were Jewish and what had happened during the war, and eventually, their daughter, the younger daughter, is five years older than I am. So, when – and, she wasn't living in that town. They sent her to Zagreb to go to school. So, I saw very little of her. But as we got older, we got closer and closer, and still now we're very good friends. I talked to her on the phone yesterday. But, I was – I was hoping to meet somebody because I was becoming a little curious about the whole thing. But, at the age of 13, I finished school in Ludbreg and I went off to Varazdin to go to high school. And there wasn't a Jew left there either that I knew, nobody, nobody in my high school. By the time I got to the university, there may have been some, but I was not aware of it. I remember hearing a name that I thought, "Well, she might be Jewish," but by that time, I had been to Switzerland, and that was a whole – and then all of a sudden, I started to understand what Jewish meant.

Q: Because you went to see the -?

A: To my uncle.

Q: To your uncle, and they were Orthodox?

- A: They were Orthodox. They were Orthodox. I went from like nothing to a totally Orthodox household.
- Q: Was that comfortable?
- A: I was fine with that. I seem to be fine with -
- Q: You're very flexible.
- A: I think I'm a bit. I think that's probably what the war did to me.
- Q: Yeah, because you keep changing.
- A: Yeah, it's okay. So, this is the thing now.
- Q: So, let me ask you something about the politics. What happens – now, there's a Communist regime.
- A: There.
- Q: There?
- A: Yeah, right.
- Q: So, you're living there, right?
- A: Yeah.
- Q: So,
- A: At that time, I mean.
- Q: What's ____?
- A: So, I'm thinking now, no, not now.
- Q: No, but then.
- A: Yes, historical present, right.
- Q: Historical present. So, are you feeling very ideologically sympathetic?
- A: Boy, am I, yes because this is the people that won the war. I mean, we are gung-ho Partisan. My uncles wearing the, you know, he's a – I'm a victim of fascism and so is he.
- Q: That was your privilege?

A: That gives me some – well, eventually it gives me – it gives me the privilege of going to Switzerland. I would not have been able to go otherwise. No, absolutely not. I mean, absolutely not. There are pictures of my uncle, you know, wearing a red star. I mean, we were really very much and that's how he was able to go back to being in a position – to being in a position of power because he had suffered during the war. So, even though they were very strange people that had come to power. I mean, people from outside whom we didn't know, who weren't quite as well-educated as we would have liked them to have been, but happen to have been in the Partisans, and therefore they were assuming positions of the Chief of Police, et cetera, et cetera, but we were very good friends of theirs. And, ideologically, we were to that side. I mean, I especially, as a young person, I think my uncle eventually understood that some of this was not good as time went on and, you know, we were under repressed and the Russian rule, and so on and so forth. I remember having fights with him about the Suez Canal, which I thought was a wonderful thing that it was being taken over by the Egyptians, and I remember having fights over the fact that, you know, I certainly thought I would go and build a road between Zagreb and Belgrade with the rest of the student body, which, of course, he thought that I was out of my mind, and I'm not going anywhere. Those kinds of things, but he was, you know, he was obviously in favor of the new regime, but then the regime turned out not to be exactly what we hoped it'd be.

Q: Now, what did it mean to be a victim -

A: Of fascism.

Q: Yeah.

A: It meant that you had been on the, basically, on the side on which you were deprived of liberty or limb or whatever, just exactly what happened to me. I was a victim of fascism, so was he, because he was in a concentration camp, and when I wanted to go to Switzerland to visit my relatives and I applied for the visa, I was given the visa as a victim of fascism because I had suffered, therefore I could be trusted. I was not on the wrong side, and therefore could be trusted to be given this visa, which was, at that time, no one went. When I came back from Switzerland, I went through every class in my high school telling people what it was like. I didn't know – nobody knew anybody who had been abroad. Of course, I didn't tell them about the Jewish parts of it. That was for me.

Q: We have to change the tape.

End of Tape #4

Tape #5

Q: When you came back, after visiting Switzerland, and you're talking to everybody about what it was like, but you don't talk about being Jewish. Do you then talk to your uncle and say, "I want to pursue this"?

A: No.

Q: You talk to nobody?

A: No.

Q: So, this is all in your head?

A: It's all in my head. I don't know – I don't know what I'm going to do with that. It doesn't really have that much meaning. I mean, it's something I learned. I learned something what that was like, being Jewish, but I don't feel like I want to do one thing or another. It took, you know, I don't think that at that point I was considering religion one way or another. It was just sort of a new knowledge, but I didn't think anybody was interested in that part. I mean, no one was interested in any religion anyway. I don't think my uncle asked me, I mean, he asked me anything about that. I mean, he knew.

Q: He knew they were Orthodox?

A: Oh, he knew they were Jewish. I don't think he knew what it meant to be Orthodox. I don't think – I mean, he knew my grand – obviously he knew my grandparents, and you know, they were sort of like my grandparents. They weren't – anyway, there aren't Orthodox. Well, there was Orthodox by American – in an American sense. They are not orthodox in when you think now of like the Heredi in Israel or something like that. I mean, they, at that time, mother's now wearing something on her head, but at that time, she wasn't. But, they really were observant. The men always wore something on their head. They followed all the laws of Kashrut. The Shabbat, you didn't do anything except go to the synagogue. And, they lived in a small Orthodox community in Montreux, and basically there were no other kinds of Jews. I, at that time, I didn't even know of the possibility of other kinds of Jews. It was all so sudden, and so out of nowhere with no background to speak of. And I was there a month. So, it's – it was sort of -

Q: Now, did he talk about his brother to you?

A: Yeah, they talked a lot about – they were – to this day, they were very much imbued with everything that happened during the war before the war, talk about the family, talk about what happened to them during the war, after the war. They were still recovering from – even though to me, it looked like they were living in this fairy land, their life really wasn't easy at all. But, I only – at the age of 16, it's just so much, you know. I mean, I was more impressed with things like, you know, you go to a supermarket and the doors

open by themselves. I mean, you know, that was very important. And all the food, I mean, in the supermarkets. And so this was still '54 in Yugoslavia. I mean, you know, we had still very little. We had just emerged, sort of, from really, not having anything in the stores, and you know, we had emerged from the time that we were getting UNRRA packages, you know, and with crazy foods from America, and my memory of that is all of the foods that we couldn't eat like – that we didn't like, like canned orange juice, and there were some clothes that we got, and I got a sweater from school, because there was piles of things, and I brought home this sweater, and my uncle made me take it back, because we weren't as poor as other people who could have this sweater. And I'm to consider other people. I was taught well to be compassionate and to understand who we were, and who I was. So, you know, all of that and then all of a sudden coming to Switzerland and seeing a lot of things in the stores, and beautifully arranged shops with jewelry and people well-dressed walking by Lake Geneva. All of that mixed in with this little thing of Jewishness, it was just too much.

Q: It's interesting, of course, that they were in Switzerland. If you'd been in other European countries, you'd have seen much more devastation.

A: Yes.

Q: So, you saw nothing.

A: I saw nothing. It was all perfect, you know, perfect land. Of course, there were extremely nice to me and, you know, took me and my aunt tells the story, I think she told it on tape, that she remembers very well that I – she remembers it better than I do, that at one point, we were doing something and there was a little discussion in the family about what to do, and I put my two cents in and I said something. I said, "Oh, I don't want to get into it, after all I'm not family." And they said, "Yes, you are. You're a member of the family." And I cried. So, there were so many different emotions, and so much new to see and learn and do. It, you know, and I knew that they were concerned about – they were concerned about my not knowing any other Jews and not knowing what Jewish meant, and being happy that I'm with someone who really cared about me. They understood that, but at the same time, they were, you know, I was 16, and I think they were mostly worrying about who am I going to marry, you know, and how is this going to go on, and I'm going to be lost to the family forever, and that kind of thing.

Q: Dora, did you somehow feel closer to them, I don't know, closer to them than to your uncle, but the fact that they were blood, did this make an impression on you that was surprising?

A: Yeah, in a way, in a way. I understand what you're saying. It's not that I feel closer to them than to my uncle, but the fact that I felt close to them was interesting to me. It's not that that's a comparison, but almost total strangers, and I remember that my uncle came to get me, Uncle Jozi, came to get me at the border. I was on the Orient Express and just coming through Simplon, and I was obviously nervous all by myself traveling, and he said he would come and meet me at the border in Brigg, and I'm looking out the window,

and I'm thinking, "How am I going to recognize him?" I had a picture; they sent me one. I had a picture, but how am I going to recognize him, and it was such a feeling when I saw him. I knew it – first of all, I knew that that was him, and I that was a really, very special feeling of some overwhelming emotional connection. And, of course, after, you know, later on when I went to live with them for a year, and studied in Switzerland, I realized they were really very good people, and they did – they did a lot to enable me to be there. And, of course, Stricek did, too, because it costs money for me to go. My relatives in Switzerland didn't have any, and I didn't even realize that. We all thought, you know, just like people who would think money grows on trees in America, well, you know, we all thought, "There's lots of money in Switzerland." Well, of course, they had very little. They had come from a concentration camp and they had nothing, and I lived better in many ways where I was. I was able to bring my aunt, as a present, a gold bracelet.

Q: Really?

A: Yes, because Stricek felt that we had to pay for whatever what I got. So, I got a ticket bought and I had the bracelet to give her, and had some toys for the kids. Toys were hard to get. I had some kind of a rubber toy that I had bought, because that you couldn't get in Yugoslavia. I had one of the gold bracelets, she still has it, that I brought her. And, you know, so, it was – it was a very kind of a strange experience in so many ways. I lost my thread. Where was I?

Q: Let me ask you, was your uncle jealous?

A: My uncle in Croatia?

Q: Yeah.

A: It's interesting. He was – he was, I mean, he was really a saint in so many ways, but you know, he had – he had – he could not have sent me. He could've squashed that whole relationship. On the contrary, he did send me, plus he sent me another time, you know, to go and study there for a year. And, then I happened to meet my husband on the way, at that.

Q: That was the second trip?

A: The second trip, right, and then I wasn't coming back. I was getting married and going to America, and through all that, I mean, I have a letter which he wrote in which I wrote to him that I met my husband, this person that I want to marry, and he, in his letter, said, "If Jozi and Magda think that that's okay, then it's okay with me." And that was very generous on his part.

Q: Was this your first boyfriend?

A: No, I had other boyfriends.

Q: You had other boyfriends.

A: But, they aren't important.

Q: None of them mattered to you in the same way.

A: No. I mean, yeah, they were boyfriends, you know, they were boyfriends, but, you know, I was young. I was 19 when I met my husband.

Q: Yeah, I understand that. So, when did you start having boyfriends? As an early teenager?

A: Yeah, as an early teenager, all forbidden, all forbidden, constantly fighting with my uncle. That's what I mean when I said, you know, when he was strict, that's because he's so old, and he doesn't understand.

Q: It's interesting given his relationship with Giza, which was also forbidden.

A: Yes.

Q: In a certain way.

A: Yes, well this was sort of has to do with morays of the place.

Q: I see, and you're a girl.

A: And I'm a girl. I have to be protected, you know, what's going to happen to me. You don't want to marry – and the business that I was going to marry this person, and it was extremely important, and he said it in the letter, and I just recently read another letter where he mentions it after the children were born, that I had promised that I would finish school, because here I was finishing my sophomore year in college and getting married, you know. That was not good. I was to finish university. I was to be – have a profession.

Q: So you could take care of yourself?

A: Yes, so that was the only issue – that was *the* issue, but I promised, I promised solemnly that I would finish school, that I would go back to school, and when I came to the States, I thought, oh, God, starting all over again. I started university in Zagreb, first I had a year. Then, I started in Switzerland, and I had a hard time because I was having to study in French and I had studied English and German before and Russian but very little French. I learned French, and I came here, and I thought, "Goodness, now what?" And, so I got pregnant instead. So, I had my daughter, and that was nice because I was sometimes feeling lonely. I mean, then, my husband was a super-wonderful person, the very best, but I went from one wonderful person who took care of me, to my aunt and uncle in Switzerland, to Dan, who could've been – who was everything that my uncle had been, just really nurturing and he was nine years older than I and had had his PhD and he was

marrying this sophomore who doesn't know from beans and coming to this new country. So, it was quite an experience to me. And so, sometimes – and there was nobody else here – so sometimes I was lonely. It was good to have my daughter. Then, when, Elliott, my son, was born a year and a half later, when he started going to school, I did go back to school.

Q: You did?

A: Yes, I did go back to school, and I did finish, and I had a long teaching career. So, I did accomplish that.

Q: And, when you left Switzerland to come to the United States, how long was it before you saw Uncle Ludva again?

A: It was, let me think when I was born in – I think it was something like six years. I could not go back earlier because, even if I had had money, because I didn't – did not want to return without the American citizenship, maybe it was less than that, and I applied for it as soon as I could, which I was three years after I was here. So, I had a year in Switzerland, and then I had three years here before I could apply, and then it took them a year to give it to me because I came from a Communist country and we were in the post-McCarthy era and they investigated me to no end, demanding why I hadn't protested when I had to join the Communist Youth of Yugoslavia. Can you imagine? If I'd protested, I'd be in jail. So -

Q: You were also a kid.

A: I was also a kid, right. So, it took them a year, and as soon as I got it, then I asked for a release from the Yugoslav citizenship, which I got. Then, I went back because it was still very, very difficult to leave the country, and then I went to back and went already with the two kids and my husband and it was wonderful.

Q: And is this the first time they've met your husband?

A: He met my husband, yes. He couldn't come to the wedding. I mean, he could have – he could have possibly come. He could've gotten a visa, et cetera, et cetera. It would've taken time. It took me six months every time to get a visa, but he was really, at that time, feeling his age. He was not ever strong particularly, and at that point he was barely leaving the house anymore, and he really felt like he could not leave the house, I mean, go on such a trip. And so, he wasn't at my wedding, which of course, was a pity, but it's sad.

Q: It must have been wonderful for him to see the grandchildren.

A: Yes, yes, yes, that was wonderful. We had a super time.

Q: Did you?

A: Yeah, really a good time, and we stayed a few months. It was really nice.

Q: Really? Fabulous!

A: Yes. Not Dan, but the kids and I did.

Q: So, the kids got a sense.

A: The kids, yes, and Wanda still has a good sense of it. Elliott was a little too young to remember a lot, but Wanda, I think, does remember. She was then in kindergarten.

Q: Now, a lot of people think the Holocaust changed them. In a way, I suppose you think you didn't go through the Holocaust.

A: Sometimes, yes. It took me a long time to understand that I'm a Holocaust survivor. I never classified myself as such until very recently, when people told me, "Of course you are a Holocaust survivor."

Q: And, what does that – does it mean something?

A: Right now, it does. It means – it means more and more. I understand – I've met now other people who didn't go to camp, and, you know, we think of them now as Holocaust survivors. I used to think that a Holocaust survivor means someone who has gone through a concentration camp, which I was extremely lucky not to have gone through. On the other hand, how do you define Holocaust? There was Holocaust all around me. I just have happened to have been at the right place at the right time, or all the wrong time I was in the right place not to be swept – swept up with the rest. So, I was just super-lucky in every way.

Q: Except for the losses.

A: Except for the losses, people losses. The losses, the losses, yeah.

Q: Even though you were little it was -

A: There's a sense of loss, and you realize it more after I had children, I became much more aware of the losses. And I think at that point, you can put yourself in the other shoes – not what it did to me, but what must it have done to my mother and my father to have your child taken away, to not know what's going to happen to that child, to be stuck some place and you don't know where your children are, whether they're dead or alive, all of that – you become aware of that and internalize it, and think of it in a different way. So, that's, you know, that's – you can understand what it means to lose a child, and now I can understand what it means to lose a spouse, which is the saddest thing for me right now, still.

Q: Dan died in '54?

A: No, Dan died in '92.

Q: Oh, I'm sorry in '92.

A: In '92, right, and that was a hard loss.

Q: It still is.

A: Yeah, yeah, and that's a kind of loss that I think I can understand sometimes people who – I was a child, so, I can see the child-parent relationship and what it would be like for my parents, but then, you know, Stricek mourned Giza forever and ever, and I can understand that very well.

Q: Now?

A: Yeah, and he mourned my brother terribly forever. So, later on, you realize it, and yeah, I suppose, I now understand it what it means to be a survivor, and it's not the easiest place either. I think I cope well, but that's it.

Q: You also seem to have enjoyed life in many ways.

A: Yes. I had a very good life in many ways, have good colleagues, good work – I love my work, I still do. I think – I think I've had a sort of joie de vivre built in that is not – it's not easily extinguishable.

Q: Well, thank you so much.

A: Thank you very much. It's been very pleasant talking to you.

Q: Oh, you, too. What we're going to do is top the tape, and we'll do the photographs.

A: Okay, thank you.

Q: And this photo's what?

[Photo shown]

A: That's my parents at their wedding.

Q: Do you know about when they were married?

A: '36, 1936. I'm not sure of the date.

Q: And, who's this?

- A: That's my parents – Silva and Salamon Basch, and I in Zagreb. This is in front of the zoolog-, zoologic- in front of the zoo. They called it the *zoloski* park, zoological park, called Maksimir.
- Q: And about how old are you?
- A: I think I'm two, maybe.
- Q: [new photo shown] Okay?
- A: This is my grandparents, my maternal grandparents. This is grandma and grandpa, Katarina and Leopold Deutsch on my grandmother's lap is my mother, Silva. Standing next to her is middle daughter Blanka, and next to my grandfather is Giza. That's the three daughters. The son is missing, Erne.
- Q: [new photo shown] This picture?
- A: This is a picture of my mother, yes, Silva, and my father Salamon Basche and then next to him is my mother's brother's wife. So, this is Irma Deutsche, and standing in front of my father is her daughter, Edita (ph) Deutsche, and the interesting thing about this picture, it's taken in Zagreb, that it's picture is in black and white, but the photographer has seemed to taken it upon himself to hand color the signs that they had to wear that said, "Jew", and this is what they had to wear during the war.
- Q: [new photo shown] Is that you?
- A: Yes, I think it's me and not my brother. I think so. This -
- Q: Go ahead.
- A: This is a picture of my father, my mother there in the center -
- Q: Is that your mother?
- A: Yes, and my mother has my brother in her lap. The rest of the people are people who worked in my father's workshop where they produced – sort of a small factory where they produced brushes of all sorts.
- Q: [new photo shown] Do you see how much like that picture is?
- A: Yes, oh yes. This is taken in Ludbreg in September of 1941, so, my brother and I are already both at my grandparents' and uncles' and aunts'. We have left Zagreb.
- Q: And do you know what this is?

- A: This is a baby carriage. It must have been for my brother.
- Q: [new photo shown] Okay.
- A: This is taken in Ludbreg, in the yard in front of the house that Stricek Ludva and Rudi Appler were building together. This is the other girls, the two of them to the left. Yes, this Zdenka and Vera Appler, my aunt Blanka's daughters, and the other one is Erne Deutsche's daughter Editra.
- Q: Okay.
- A: This is Stricek Ludva. This is Ludva Vrancic.
- Q: [new photo shown] This?
- A: Both of those pictures – this picture was taken in 1943, I think, at the time when Stricek Ludva was in Jasenovac. This is Giza, his wife, Giza Deutsche, formerly Deutsche, and I and my brother, and the picture was taken at the photographers so that it could be sent to Jasenovac to Stricek.
- Q: So, both of these pictures were sent?
- A: Yes, both of these pictures were sent, yes. The other one is just the two of us.
- Q: [new photo shown] Go ahead.
- A: This is my brother and I in 1943 in Ludbreg, 1944, yeah, 1944.
- Q: How old were you here?
- A: I would be six, and my brother's three years younger.
- Q: [new photo shown] Who is this?
- A: This is Ljudevit Vrancic, my Stricek Ludva in – on the steps of his house, which was built by his parents, and this is more or less where I saw him when I saw him for the last time, and that's how I think of him much of the time. It was taken probably in the 1970s.
- Q: [new photo shown] Okay.
- A: This is in our house in Ludbreg, and Stricek and I often played the piano and violin together. There were people in the house. I think you see from the left, somebody's elbow, and so we were entertaining, playing something together, almost always classical music, and that's the old piano that belonged to his family on which I learned how to play.

Q: What kind of piano was it? Do you remember?

A: I don't remember the brand. It was Austrian, though, and Stricek had a violin which he thought was Galliano. He was very fond of it, but I do – I did have it looked at it, and it was a fake, but it was a reasonably good violin. He used to go and take lessons in Hungary and of course, in Varazdin, and I had my first lessons from one of our housekeepers who was actually a very well-versed lady but lost everything after the war, came to be our housekeeper, Marija Velovir, and she taught me German and piano, but later on I went to music school in Varazdin.

Q: Okay.

A: This is my wedding. This is Dan, Dan Klayman, and Dora getting married in an Orthodox wedding in the mountains of Switzerland above Montreux and Chateau d'Oex. We were being married by the Grand Rabbi of Luxembourg, who was a family friend and going to the left – this is Uncle Jozi, and then Auntie Lena, my father's sister who came from Israel for the wedding, and Leon, my husband's brother, and his mother Clara. This is Aunt Magda, Jozi's wife, and this is Bernard, Dov, who also came from Israel for my wedding, and this is Dan's uncle and aunt who came from France. They lived in France – his mother's brother and sister-in-law, and -

Q: These two?

A: Yes, these two. So, that's Dan's family. And crouching down there is my cousin Donny and my cousin Jakov, Donny, yes, Jakov, and Dan's cousin Charlie, who came from France, and they other two were, of course, in Switzerland. That's Jozi and Magda's children who now live in Israel and have many children.

Q: [new photo shown] Okay.

A: That was 1990. And this is Dan and I and that's one of the last pictures of the two of us before Dan died in 1992. It was taken in '91 at the cousin's wedding in Vermont. It was very lovely there.

End of Tape #5

Conclusion of Interview